



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



WEDNESDAY — 6 APR 2022

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HEADLINE	04/06 New Covid mystery: no rise in cases
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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/06/briefing/covid-cases-us-omicron-subvariant.html
GIST	<p>To many people’s surprise — including mine — new Covid-19 cases in the U.S. have not begun to rise. Over the past two weeks, they have held roughly steady, falling about 1 percent, even as the highly contagious BA.2 subvariant of Omicron has become the dominant form of Covid in the U.S.</p> <p>Across much of Europe, by contrast, cases surged last month after BA.2 began spreading there, and many experts expected a similar pattern here. That hasn’t happened. “It has not taken off,” Michael Osterholm, a University of Minnesota epidemiologist, told me.</p> <p>What’s going on? Today’s newsletter looks at four possible explanations.</p> <p>1. More immunity</p> <p>Even though the U.S. has a lower vaccination rate than Western Europe, this country may still have built up more immunity — thanks to our politically polarized response to the virus.</p> <p>In liberal parts of the U.S., vaccination rates can be even higher than in Europe. In conservative communities, many Americans have been so dismissive of Covid that they have long been living almost normally. As a result, the virus has already swept through these communities, conferring at least some immunity on many people.</p> <p>This laissez-faire approach has had horrible downsides. Covid death rates have been much higher in counties that voted for Donald Trump than those that voted for Joe Biden. But for people who survived a prior Covid infection, it does confer some immune protection, especially if it was recent.</p> <p>“Most of Europe has been pretty Covid averse,” William Hanage, a Harvard epidemiologist, said on a recent episode of the “In the Bubble” podcast, “whereas parts of the United States have been quite Covid curious.” Hanage said that he still expected U.S. caseloads to rise soon. But, he added, “I don’t think it’s going to be as dramatic as Europe.”</p> <p>If that’s correct, a preview is already visible in the Northeast, where cases have been rising lately, but not as steeply as in Europe.</p> <p>One possible reason: There are not as many Americans vulnerable to infection. The earlier version of the Omicron variant seems to have infected about 45 percent of Americans, according to Andy Slavitt, a former Covid adviser in the Biden White House. That share appears to be higher than Europe’s.</p> <p>2. Fewer tests</p> <p>The shift toward at-home testing in recent months means that a smaller share of actual Covid cases may be showing up in the data that government agencies report and news organizations like The Times publish. The government data relies on laboratory tests.</p> <p>Another potential factor depressing the volume of tests is reduced access for lower-income Americans. Some uninsured people now must pay for their own tests, and many testing clinics have closed.</p> <p>All of which raises the possibility that Covid cases really are surging now, even if the data doesn’t show it. Jessica Malaty Rivera of Boston Children’s Hospital told The Atlantic that the quality of current Covid data was “abysmal.” Dr. Scott Gottlieb, a former F.D.A. commissioner, told CNBC that he thought some parts of the country were “dramatically” underreporting cases.</p> <p>This chart suggests that underreporting is a real issue. As you can see, official testing in several European countries increased as BA.2 spread, while testing in the U.S. has declined modestly.</p> <p>Still, the shortage of testing does not seem to be the only reason that cases have not surged in the U.S. Trends in Covid hospitalizations typically lag case trends by only about a week. And hospitalizations have continued to fall in the U.S., to their lowest level in more than two years.</p>

3. Just wait

Even if high levels of immunity have kept cases from rising so far, the effect may not be permanent. Remember: About 45 percent of Americans were infected with Omicron, which leaves about 55 percent who were not. While many of those 55 percent may have had an earlier version of Covid, immunity can wane over time.

The current moment might be one of those times when we're asking why cases have not begun to rise right as they begin to rise. "It may be too early to see a signal," Jennifer Nuzzo, a Brown University epidemiologist, told me.

4. Another mystery

Throughout the pandemic, Osterholm — the Minnesota epidemiologist — has lamented that many scientists, journalists and laypeople [exaggerate](#) how much we actually know about Covid. His favorite example: The Alpha variant swept through Michigan and Minnesota last year and then largely died out, without causing case increases in other parts of the U.S. Another example: BA.2 has recently become the dominant variant in India, South Africa and some other countries [without causing a spike in cases](#).

When I called Osterholm yesterday to ask why cases had not surged over the past few weeks, he simply said: "I don't know, and I don't think anybody really knows."

Of all the variants, only the original Omicron was so contagious that it spread around the world in predictable ways, he said. Other versions of the virus have surged and receded in mysterious ways, much as a forest fire can die out without burning down an entire forest.

The bottom line: Cases still seem likely to rise, perhaps significantly, in the U.S. soon. But a new wave looks less certain than it did a few weeks ago. Regardless, [the steps that can save lives](#) in coming months remain the same: more vaccine shots, including boosters; and greater awareness of available treatments that offer extra protection for the vulnerable.

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HEADLINE	04/06 WHO: Covid cases, deaths continue to fall
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/who-covid-cases-and-deaths-continue-to-fall-globally/
GIST	<p>GENEVA (AP) — The number of coronavirus cases reported globally has dropped for a second consecutive week and confirmed COVID-19 deaths also fell last week, according to a World Health Organization report issued Wednesday.</p> <p>In its latest pandemic report, WHO said 9 million cases were reported, a 16% weekly decline, and more than 26,000 new deaths from COVID-19. The U.N. health agency said confirmed coronavirus infections were down in all regions of the world.</p> <p>However, it warned that the reported numbers carry considerable uncertainty because many countries have stopped widespread testing for the coronavirus, meaning that many cases are likely going undetected.</p> <p>WHO said it was also tracking an omicron variant that is a recombination of two versions: BA.1 and BA.2, which was first detected in Britain in January. WHO said early estimates suggest the recombined omicron could be about 10% more transmissible than previous mutations, but further evidence is needed.</p> <p>The agency has continued to warn countries not to drop their COVID-19 protocols too quickly and predicted that future variants could spread easily if surveillance and testing systems are shelved.</p> <p>Last week, the U.K. said COVID-19 had hit record levels across the country, with government statistics estimating that about 1 in 13 people were infected. Those figures came on the same day the British government abandoned its free testing program.</p>

Meanwhile, Chinese authorities conducted more mass testing this week across Shanghai, which remains in lockdown following another jump in infections; the city has recorded more than 90,000 cases but no deaths during the pandemic.

Despite growing public frustration and concerns about economic effects, China says it is sticking to its hard-line "zero-tolerance" approach mandating lockdowns, mass testing and the compulsory isolation of all suspected cases and close contacts. Following a public uproar, Shanghai authorities said Wednesday they would allow at least some parents to stay with children infected with COVID-19, making an exception to a policy of isolating anyone who tests positive.

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HEADLINE	04/06 Russia forces pound key cities
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/us-allies-ready-new-russia-sanctions-after-bucha-killings-2022-04-06/
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine/DUBLIN, April 6 (Reuters) - Artillery pounded key cities in Ukraine on Wednesday, as its president urged the West to act decisively in imposing new and tougher sanctions being readied against Russia in response to civilian killings widely condemned as war crimes.</p> <p>Western sanctions over Russia's invasion gained new impetus this week when dead civilians shot at close range were found in the town of Bucha after it was retaken from Russian forces.</p> <p>As Pope Francis described the killings there as a "massacre", the head of the European Commission signalled further sanctions - including examining a ban on energy imports - on top of ones unveiled by the bloc on Tuesday. Washington is in turn due to announce new sanctions on Wednesday.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the West needed to act decisively in taking "more rigid" steps.</p> <p>"When we are hearing new rhetoric about sanctions... I can't tolerate any indecisiveness after everything that Russian troops have done," he told Irish lawmakers by videolink.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials say between 150 and 300 bodies might be in a mass grave by a church in Bucha, north of the capital Kyiv, where satellite images taken weeks ago show bodies of civilians on a street, a private U.S. company said.</p> <p>Moscow, which refers to the conflict as a "special military operation" designed to demilitarise Ukraine, denied targeting civilians there and called the evidence presented a forgery staged by the West to discredit it.</p> <p>To the south, the besieged southern port of Mariupol has been under bombardment throughout most of the invasion that began on Feb. 24, trapping tens of thousands of residents without food, water or power.</p> <p>"The humanitarian situation in the city is worsening," British military intelligence said on Wednesday, while Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said people trying to flee would have to use their own vehicles.</p> <p>Reuters could not immediately verify the British report.</p> <p>Vereshchuk said authorities would try to evacuate civilians trapped elsewhere through 11 humanitarian corridors.</p> <p>ENERGY SANCTIONS PUSH?</p> <p>Ukraine's foreign minister said that while he welcomed the latest set of EU sanctions only an embargo on Russian gas and oil and cutting off all Russian banks from the global financial system could "stop" President Vladimir Putin.</p>

	<p>"I will take a gas/oil embargo and de-SWIFTing of all Russian banks to stop Putin. Difficult times require difficult decisions," Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter.</p> <p>Russian forces last week pulled back from positions outside Kyiv and shifted the focus of their assault away from the capital, and Ukraine's general staff said the northeastern city of Kharkiv, the country's second-largest, also remained under attack.</p> <p>Authorities in the eastern region of Luhansk on Wednesday urged residents to get out "while it is safe" from an area that Ukraine also expects to be the target of a new offensive.</p> <p>Speaking a day after the European Union announced new sanctions, including a ban on Russian coal imports and denying Russian ships access to EU ports, the head of the EU executive, Ursula von der Leyen, said there was more to come.</p> <p>"These sanctions will not be our last sanctions," she told European Parliament on Wednesday. "Now we have to look into oil and revenues Russia gets from fossil fuels."</p> <p>Von der Leyen's remarks signalled the bloc's strengthening resolve to take the step that Kyiv says is vital to securing a deal to end the war. But German Finance Minister Christian Lindner said in a newspaper interview, Europe's biggest economy which relies on Russian gas for much of its energy needs, was just not ready for an immediate ban.</p> <p>The White House said earlier that new sanctions, coordinated between Washington, the Group of Seven advanced economies and the EU, will target Russian banks and officials and ban new investment in Russia.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Spike: 30yr mortgage rate over 5%
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/mortgage-inflation-rates-federal-reserve/2022/04/05/id/1064474/
GIST	<p>The average rate for the 30-year fixed mortgage just crossed the 5% threshold, now at 5.02%, according to CNBC. This time last year, they stood at 3.38%.</p> <p>Mortgage rates, which loosely follow the yield on the U.S. 10-year Treasury, have been climbing since the start of the year, in part due to the Federal Reserve's policies to curb inflation and the global economic turmoil resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>"It is of paramount importance to get inflation down," Federal Reserve Vice Chair Lael Brainard said, according to AFP. "Accordingly, the committee will continue tightening monetary policy methodically through a series of interest rate increases and by starting to reduce the balance sheet at a rapid pace as soon as our May meeting."</p> <p>"To hear her speak about bond-buying adjustments in such blunt, urgent terms is unsettling for the market with just over 24 hours to go before we see the minutes from the most recent Fed meeting," according to Mortgage News Daily COO Matthew Graham. "At this point, traders are taking Brainard's comments to foreshadow an extremely unfriendly conversation about bond buying to be revealed in the minutes."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 BA.2 variant pressures parts of US
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/omicron-ba-2-variant-priorities-parts-of-u-s-11649181325?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	The Omicron BA.2 variant is increasing its share of U.S. cases and putting particular pressure on parts of the Northeast, where wastewater readings and Covid-19 cases have ticked upward again from low levels.

Recorded Covid-19 cases remain low nationally and hospitals are treating the smallest number of Covid-19 patients after any surge. Places where cases are rising, including New York, are reporting relatively small increases from recent troughs. The mixed signals are prompting officials to warn that BA.2 will likely lead to more viral transmission, but also hope among public-health experts that warming weather and built-up immunity in the population are muting the variant's impact.

"There are certainly some big factors that are in our favor right now compared to the situation back in November and December," said Bruce Y. Lee, professor of health policy and management at the City University of New York School of Public Health.

The pressure point is BA.2, a version of the Omicron variant, which continues to take over in the U.S., according to new estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention this week. The subvariant represented an estimated 72% of national cases by the week ended April 2, and around 84% in both New England and a region including New York and New Jersey, the CDC estimates show.

A different version of Omicron hit the U.S. late last year and fueled a record number of cases and hospitalizations, as well as the second-highest peak in daily death reports since the pandemic began.

Public-health officials say they are concerned about BA.2 because it appears to spread even more easily than the Omicron variant detected earlier, though evidence thus far hasn't suggested differences in the severity of cases. The subvariant has recently triggered surges in Europe, where pandemic trends have tended to foreshadow patterns in the U.S.

In the U.S., some wastewater-sampling sites used to detect how much virus is circulating in the population have recorded increases recently. The latest data from Biobot Analytics Inc., which tests wastewater samples for hundreds of treatment sites around the U.S., show readings from the Northeast in particular have been edging higher from low levels.

"The amount of virus in wastewater has been a pretty reliable indicator of what is likely to come," said Daniel Kuritzkes, chief of the division of infectious diseases at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

Some parts of the Northeast are recording higher case counts, even as more at-home testing makes it harder for health departments to know when people test positive. Seven of 10 states with the highest rates of new cases per 100,000 are in the Northeast, including most New England states, according to the CDC.

New York City's daily case average over the past seven days is about 1,400, compared with about 1,000 over the past 28 days. City officials on Friday reiterated their recommendation that people wear masks indoors and said they would distribute more than six million home tests at schools, houses of worship and community centers.

Nationwide, the seven-day average for newly reported cases is about 26,000 a day, according to Johns Hopkins University, down from recent weeks where the average hovered closer to 30,000. National counts of newly admitted Covid-19 patients also recently fell to the lowest level after any surge.

CDC Director Rochelle Walensky on Tuesday said there are a handful of counties where data show rising cases and evidence of severe disease, such as hospitalizations.

"The high level of immunity in the population from vaccines, boosters and previous infection will provide some level of protection against BA.2," Dr. Walensky said at a White House Covid-19 briefing. "However, we strongly encourage everyone to be up-to-date on their Covid-19 vaccines."

Public-health and virus experts expect BA.2 will drive cases higher nationally, but they say they hope the U.S. will avoid a major surge. While Omicron hit just as winter weather and end-of-year holidays drew people together indoors, where the virus spreads most easily, BA.2 is spreading in the spring, when people tend to spend more time outdoors.

	<p>The winter surge also likely left a large chunk of the U.S. with increased resistance, because BA.2 is similar to the coronavirus version that recently infected millions of people. “It does seem that there’s generally pretty good protection,” said Melissa Maginnis, an associate professor and virologist at the University of Maine.</p> <p>Hackensack Meridian Health in New Jersey has contracted with temporary staffing agencies to have extra workers on standby in case hospitalizations rise rapidly with BA.2, said the system’s chief executive, Robert Garrett. Covid-19 hospitalizations among patients in the system climbed slightly in the past week to about 100 from a prior low of 90.</p> <p>That is far below the Omicron peak of 1,400 Covid-19 patients reached in January across Hackensack Meridian’s hospitals. “I am feeling cautiously optimistic,” Mr. Garrett said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Severe storms tear across Southeast
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2022/04/05/severe-thunderstorms-tornadoes-south-southeast/
GIST	<p>Intense thunderstorms, some producing significant tornadoes, raked across the Southeast on Tuesday, producing more than 100 reports of severe weather, including 38 tornadoes from Mississippi to South Carolina.</p> <p>At least one person died from a tornado that struck Pembroke, Ga., about 30 miles west of Savannah, according to television affiliate WJCL in Savannah. The affiliate also reported three people were injured by a twister in Allendale, Ga.</p> <p>Storms produced damaging winds and twisters throughout the day as they progressed from west to east. They reached their peak intensity in southern Georgia and South Carolina during the late afternoon and evening, when the Weather Service issued numerous “particularly dangerous situation” warnings for large and destructive tornadoes.</p> <p>Weather Service damage reports and social media video from the tornado outbreak revealed not only toppled trees and wires scattered throughout the Southeast, but also serious damage to homes and buildings.</p> <p>More than 25,000 customers were without power in Georgia and South Carolina.</p> <p>Throughout Tuesday, Weather Service offices in the Southeast issued scores of tornado warnings. The warnings came perilously close and sometimes included major population centers, including Macon, Ga., Savannah, Columbia, S.C., and Charleston, but twisters appeared to miss these cities.</p> <p>Nearby locations were not so fortunate.</p> <p>About 6 p.m., a particularly dangerous situation tornado warning was issued around Ulmer, S.C., about 60 miles south of Columbia, and areas to the northeast. Social media showed the large, damaging tornado on the ground just to the northeast.</p> <p>The damaging and deadly tornado that passed through Pembroke touched down a little after 5 p.m. A tornado warning was then in effect until 6:15 p.m. for areas on the north and west side of Savannah for the same twister. Social media videos showed the twister passing through Ellabell, just east of Pembroke. One video showed a large piece of a house sheared off by the tornado and hurled sideways.</p> <p>Columbia was also under a tornado warning before 6 p.m. for a confirmed twister but it appeared to dissipate before reaching the city.</p> <p>A tornado emergency was declared for the area near Allendale and Sycamore, S.C., around 4 p.m. for a confirmed “large and extremely destructive” twister. Radar detected large amounts of debris lofted by the</p>

[twister](#) about 70 miles south of Columbia. The Weather Service received reports of roofs blown off structures in Allendale. Just two hours later, a new tornado warning was issued for the north side of Allendale, very close to where the first twister struck.

Between 3 and 4 p.m. Eastern, [several tornado warnings](#) were active in central and southern Georgia as well as western South Carolina, including for confirmed twisters to the north and southeast of Macon.

During the morning, some structural damage from tornadoes was [reported near Newton, Miss.](#), which is between Jackson and Meridian, and in Coffeeville, Ala., about 75 miles north of Mobile. Warnings for radar-confirmed tornadoes were then issued east of Montgomery, Ala., just before noon Central.

The risk of severe storms will continue in the Southeast on Wednesday, while another round from a second system is possible in the southern and eastern Mid-Atlantic on Thursday.

There already are signs that a robust severe weather event may occur early next week, with the first potentially large-scale classic spring event striking the Plains. Conditions look broadly supportive for tornadoes, and it's probably just a taste of what's ahead in the second half of April and much of May as severe weather season enters its prime.

The zones most at risk for additional storms on Wednesday and Thursday, as well as early next week, are highlighted below.

Wednesday's risk

The outlook for severe weather on Wednesday. (NOAA/SPC)

- **Areas impacted:** A Level 3 enhanced risk is up for northern Alabama, northern Georgia and southeastern Tennessee, including Birmingham, Atlanta and Chattanooga. A more expansive Level 2 slight risk stretches from southern Kentucky through the remainder of Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina and dips into the Florida Panhandle.
- **Timing:** The specific timing and evolution of storms will hinge on what transpires with Tuesday's storms and how the atmosphere recovers. That said, thunderstorms are more probable in the afternoon and evening.
- **Hazards:** Rotating thunderstorms or supercells aren't generally expected, but lines or bowing segments capable of producing damaging straight-line winds or an isolated tornado are possible.

Thursday's risk

The outlook for severe weather Thursday. (NOAA/SPC)

- **Areas affected:** Thunderstorms on Thursday will probably be confined to extreme eastern parts of North Carolina and perhaps southeastern Virginia. That's where a Level 2 slight risk has been drawn. Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Wilmington, N.C., are affected.
- **Timing:** Timing is critical. Morning storms to the north might "work over" the air and sap much of the juice from it, but if the front slows down just a tad or the "warm sector" can become better established, severe-weather chances would climb. Any severe weather should probably hold until 3 p.m.
- **Hazards:** Storms are likely to be structured as a broken line, but a seasonably strong jet stream aloft, with air racing northward at highway speeds barely a mile above the ground, will be present. Any thunderstorm that taps into that momentum aloft will be able to transfer it to the surface in the form of strong to locally damaging wind gusts.

Looking ahead

Another round of strong-to-severe thunderstorms will commence Monday. The jury is out on the specifics, but a few ingredients appear to portend storms on the Plains.

A dry line, or the leading edge of arid air from the desert Southwest, will sharpen along the I-35 corridor in south-central Kansas, Oklahoma and northern Texas on Monday. Ahead of it, moisture-rich air from the Gulf of Mexico will be in place. Strong upper-level winds from a dip in the jet stream will accompany an upper-air disturbance, setting the stage for storms.

	It remains to be seen whether wind shear, or a change in wind speed or direction with height, is adequate to support tornadoes. Regardless, expect an uptick in severe weather over the Lower 48 toward the start of the next workweek.
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HEADLINE	04/05 Russia mercenaries, Mali army in killings
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/05/russian-mercenaries-and-mali-army-accused-of-killing-300-civilians
GIST	<p>Suspected Russian mercenaries participated in an operation with Mali's army in March in which about 300 civilian men were allegedly killed over five days, Human Rights Watch (HRW) says.</p> <p>Witnesses and local community leaders said hundreds of men were rounded up and killed in small groups during the anti-jihadist operation on 23 March in the central town of Moura. The rural town of about 10,000 inhabitants is in the Mopti region, a hotspot of jihadist activity that has intensified and spread to neighbouring countries in the Sahel region.</p> <p>Local security sources told HRW that more than 100 Russian-speaking men were allegedly involved in the operation, which HRW described as the worst single atrocity reported in Mali's decade-long armed conflict. Witnesses spoke of white soldiers talking in an unfamiliar foreign language they believed to be Russian.</p> <p>Mali's army has long been accused of rights abuses during counter-insurgency operations. A Mali military spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request by Reuters for comment on the HRW report.</p> <p>"Abuses by armed Islamist groups is no justification at all for the military's deliberate slaughter of people in custody," said Corinne Dufka, Sahel director at Human Rights Watch. "The Malian government is responsible for this atrocity, the worst in Mali in a decade, whether carried out by Malian forces or associated foreign soldiers."</p> <p>After the reports of alleged atrocities in Moura, Mali's army said last week that from 23-31 March it killed 203 Islamist militants and detained a further 51 following intelligence reports about a meeting between rebel groups. It added that it would investigate any allegations of rights abuses.</p> <p>Horrific accounts of alleged abuses by Malian forces and suspected Russian mercenaries have emerged from the town. On 27 March, witnesses said that Malian soldiers arrived by helicopter near Moura's animal market and exchanged gunfire with jihadists. Helicopters blocked exits from the area as traders and civilians tried to escape.</p> <p>The witnesses said soldiers patrolled the town, killing several unarmed men trying to flee and detaining hundreds more. The witnesses said groups of up to 10 men at a time, most from the pastoralist Fulani (also known as Peuhl) ethnic group, were killed.</p> <p>One trader said he was drinking tea with his two brothers while waiting for the market to start when he heard shooting. "Seven Russians approached, gesturing for us to get up. There were no Malian soldiers with them. They searched us and the house, then took us east of the village, near the river, where we found another 100 men," he told HRW. "Another group of Russians pointed at my brothers and another man. I thought they were going for interrogation. They took them several metres away and executed them, point blank."</p> <p>Mali, an impoverished country of nearly 21 million people, is governed by a junta that seized power in a coup in August 2020, promising to restore civilian rule. The country is under sanctions from the west Africa bloc Ecowas for ignoring an earlier commitment to hold elections in February this year.</p>

Swathes of Mali lie outside government control, owing to a brutal jihadist conflict that started in 2012 and has spread to neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger.

Germany's foreign ministry urged Mali to hold an independent investigation into the reports of civilian deaths. "Mali's general staff mentioned no civilian victims in its report of the operation," the German Foreign Office said. "That is contradicted by possible witness statements that mention targeted killing of civilians."

There has been a sharp rise in killings of civilians and terror suspects in Mali since late December, both by jihadist groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State, and by Malian security forces. HRW said at least 107 civilians have been killed, and that 71 of the deaths could be linked to Malian-aligned forces.

Mali's military leadership has forged closer links with Russia after its relations soured with the west – in particular with France, its former ally and colonial-era ruler, which has committed to scaling down its forces in the Sahel.

The Malian government is battling the insurgency with the help of private military contractors from Russia's Wagner group. Mali and Russia have previously said they are not mercenaries but trainers helping local troops with equipment bought from Russia.

Wagner, established in 2014 to support pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, is allegedly funded by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a powerful businessman closely linked to Vladimir Putin who has faced western sanctions. Prigozhin and Moscow have denied any knowledge of Wagner and, officially, private military companies are illegal in Russia. On paper the firm does not exist, with no company registration, tax returns or organisational chart to be found.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Shanghai whole city lockdown
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/05/shanghai-puts-whole-city-on-lockdown-as-covid-cases-surge
GIST	<p>Shanghai has put all its 26 million residents under lockdown in China's single-biggest city-wide imposition of the restrictions since the pandemic began as authorities admitted the difficulty in containing the fast-spreading Omicron variant.</p> <p>Until this week, the megacity – also China's most populous – adopted an approach of phased lockdown. Initially, the eastern side of the Huangpu River went into lockdown between 28 March and 1 April, then the western side followed suit for another four days.</p> <p>But that approach has not worked as case numbers continued to rise. On Monday, the number of new daily positive cases exceeded 10,000 for the first time. Since March, the Shanghai government said, over 73,000 positive cases have been found.</p> <p>These numbers are small compared with countries such as the US and the UK, but they are some of the largest since Covid was first reported in China in late 2019.</p> <p>At least 38,000 medical personnel have been deployed to Shanghai from other parts of China. State media said the operation is the biggest since the Wuhan lockdown in early 2020.</p> <p>"Currently, Shanghai's epidemic prevention and control is at the most difficult and most critical stage," said Wu Qianyu, an official at the municipal health commission. "We must adhere to the general policy of dynamic clearance without hesitation, without wavering."</p> <p>To achieve "dynamic clearance", the government poured its resource to test all residents in the city on Monday. About 20,000 sample collection points were set up across the city, and 50,000 medics were dispatched to help test the population, state media said.</p>

On Monday, authorities announced further restrictions would be placed on transport links. This means more tube lines would be suspended. On Tuesday, 30 main hospitals across the city have suspended their operations, according to the Shanghai municipal health commission website.

Yet, as mainland China's most important financial hub came to a standstill, citizens are complaining about the government's lack of organisation and preparation. Some residents reported difficulty in ordering food and water online, while others say they were unable to access crucial medical resources when they need them.

"I'm not able to buy food. I have nothing left in my fridge. My neighbourhood has been sealed off. I don't know what to do," said one resident on Weibo, the social media site.

Another wrote: "Our 90-year-old has diabetes. Before the lockdown, our doctor prescribed to us some medication to use at home because all the nurses were asked to help with Covid tests. Suddenly, Pudong was shutdown, and we were unable to get the medication at all. Then we bought it online, but the delivery company was unable to send it to us because they are not delivering anything now."

Over the last few days, mobile phone footage showing residents protest against confusing lockdown messaging and being unable to buy daily necessities has been circulating online. In one video, several residents in a housing compound shouted: "We want to eat, we want to go to work, we want to have the right to know." The footage has been taken down by censors.

The sense of confusion, chaos and helplessness is overwhelming across a city that until recent weeks was a Covid success story. "[A] lack of communications with the public and psychological preparations still drags an effective response to the pandemic," said Chen Xi, a public health expert at Yale school of public health.

According to China's present protocols, those who test positive have to be quarantined in a centralised facility. But Chen said given the current situation, the authorities should allow some – for example those infected individuals with no symptoms or light symptoms – to quarantine at home, in order to free up resources.

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HEADLINE	04/06 Day 42 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/06/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-42-of-the-russian-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskiy has given the UN security council a harrowing account of atrocities in his country and demanded Russian leaders "be brought to justice for war crimes". Zelenskiy called for an international tribunal similar to the Nuremberg trials of Nazis after the second world war, speaking of Russian forces: "There is not a single crime that they would not commit there."• Atrocities in the Ukrainian town of Bucha are "only one of many examples of what the occupiers have been doing on our land for the past 41 days," Zelenskiy said, adding that there were many more that the world had yet to learn the full truth about. "Russia wants to turn Ukraine into silent slaves," he said.• The Ukraine president also questioned the ability of the UN security council to provide security. "The UN Security Council exists, and security in the world doesn't. For anyone," he said in his nightly address. "Now Kyiv is the capital of global democracy, the capital of the struggle for freedom for all on the European continent."• The UN secretary general, António Guterres, said he will "never forget the horrifying images of civilians killed" in Bucha. Speaking at the UN security council in New York, he said the war in Ukraine is "one of the greatest challenges ever" to the "international order". The UN undersecretary general for political and peacebuilding affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, said allegations of sexual violence perpetrated by Russian forces include "gang-rape and rapes in front of children".

- **The Ukrainian human rights ombudswoman, Lyudmyla Denisova, said between 150 and 300 bodies may be in a mass grave by a church in the town of Bucha.** [She did not say](#) how the authorities had reached the estimate.
- **Satellite imagery of one Bucha street** published by Maxar Technologies from 19 and 21 March appears to show several bodies in exactly the same position as in video footage and photos taken this weekend in the same street. The **UK's ministry of defence** said eight bodies had lain on the street for at least ten days before the town was reclaimed from Russian forces.
- **Displaced residents of Bucha should not yet return to their homes because there are still mines in the area** after Russian troops withdrew from the town, its mayor, Anatoliy Fedoruk, said. Fedoruk said [about 3,700 civilians had stayed in Bucha](#), which had a pre-war population of about 37,000, throughout the Russian occupation.
- **The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said the evidence from Bucha shows “a deliberate campaign to kill, to torture, to rape, to commit atrocities” by Russian forces.** “The reports are more than credible. [The evidence is there for the world to see,](#)” he told reporters. **The UN human rights office spokesperson, Liz Throssell, said all the signs from Bucha pointed towards civilians having been directly targeted and killed.**
- **At the UN security council, India [condemned the killing](#) of civilians in the Bucha and called for an independent investigation.** Israel also condemned Russia’s “war crimes” in Ukraine [in a statement](#).
- **The Kremlin said allegations that Russian forces committed war crimes by executing civilians in Bucha were a “monstrous forgery” aimed at “denigrating” the Russian army.** Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters that [remarks by US president Joe Biden](#) calling for Russian president Vladimir Putin to be tried for war crimes [were unacceptable and unworthy of a US leader](#).
- On a visit to **Trostianets**, a town close to the Russian border, the Guardian found evidence of [summary executions, torture and systematic looting during the month of occupation](#). Yuriy Bova, the mayor of Trostianets, said it was too early to give a reliable estimate of how many civilians the Russians had killed, saying it was: “definitely more than 50, but probably not hundreds”.
- **The Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said Nato and G7 foreign ministers meeting on Wednesday and Thursday will discuss the delivery of advanced weapons to Ukraine.** Ammunition, medical supplies and “high-end” weapons systems would also be discussed, [he added](#).
- **The US and its allies are planning more sanctions on Russia** with the objective to “deplete the resources that Putin has to continue his war against Ukraine,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki said. The new penalties will include a **ban on all new investment in Russia and greater sanctions on its financial institutions and state-owned enterprises**. Separately, the **US Treasury Department moved to block any Russian government debt payments** with US dollars from accounts at US financial institutions, making it harder for Russia to meet its financial obligations.
- **The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, announced that the EU is also proposing new sanctions against Russia, including an import ban on coal worth €4bn (£3.3bn) per year.** [The package will include](#) a full transaction ban on four key Russian banks, a ban on Russian vessels and Russian-operated vessels accessing EU ports, as well as targeted export and import bans.
- **US Army Gen Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the United States should look at the development of more bases in eastern [Europe](#) to protect against Russian aggression,** but rotate forces through them rather than make permanent deployments. Milley suggested the conflict would extend beyond [Ukraine](#) and continue for “at least” years.
- **Almost two hundred Russian diplomatic staff have been expelled from European countries** this week in a direct expression of governments’ outrage at the killings of Ukrainian civilians. [In what amounts to one of the biggest diplomatic breakdowns of recent years,](#) 206 Russian diplomats and embassy staff have been told since Monday they are no longer welcome to stay by governments in Italy, France, Germany and elsewhere.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British prime minister Boris Johnson urged Russian citizens not to fall for Putin's propaganda, and to circumvent tough internet censorship rules by installing technology to discover the full extent of war crimes committed during the invasion of Ukraine.
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HEADLINE	04/06 US, G7, EU to hit Russia in new sanctions
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/06/us-and-allies-to-hit-russia-with-new-sanctions-as-outrage-over-civilian-killings-grows-ukraine
GIST	<p>The United States and its allies are preparing to impose new sanctions on Moscow over civilian killings in Ukraine as the west makes a fresh attempt to cripple Vladimir Putin's economy and war effort.</p> <p>President Volodymyr Zelenskiy described the atrocities in his country as "war crimes" while Ukraine authorities said close to more than 4.400 incidents were being investigated.</p> <p>"Russia will be responsible for Bucha in The Hague," Ukraine's prosecutor general Iryna Venediktova said in a statement.</p> <p>Western sanctions on Russia over its nearly six-week invasion of its neighbour gained new impetus this week after bodies of civilians shot at close range were discovered in the town of Bucha, after a retreat by Russian forces.</p> <p>Russia, in playbook style, has denied responsibility and suggested the images are fake or the deaths occurred after its troops pulled out. However, satellite images show that bodies were lying on streets in Bucha for days before Russian troops left the town.</p> <p>The White House said sanctions to be unveiled on Wednesday were in part a response to Bucha. The measures, coordinated between Washington, G7 economies and the European Union, will target Russian banks and officials and ban new investment in Russia.</p> <p>"The goal is to force them to make a choice," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said. "The biggest part of our objective here is to deplete the resources that Putin has to continue his war against Ukraine."</p> <p>Psaki declined to comment on reports in the Wall Street Journal that the sanctions would target Putin's two daughters.</p> <p>Proposed EU sanctions, which the bloc's 27 member states must approve, would ban buying Russian coal and prevent Russian ships from entering EU ports. Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, said the bloc was also working on banning oil imports. Europe, which obtains about a third of its natural gas from Russia, has been wary of the economic impact a total ban on Russian energy would bring. But signalling strengthening EU resolve, Germany's foreign minister said the coal ban was the first step toward an embargo on all Russian fossil fuel imports.</p> <p>Renewed pressure from the west comes after Zelenskiy gave the UN security council a harrowing account of atrocities in his country and demanded that Russian leaders be "brought to justice for war crimes".</p> <p>A day after US president Joe Biden called for Putin to be held to account, Zelenskiy said there should be an international tribunal similar to the Nuremberg trials of Nazis after the second world war.</p> <p>There has been global revulsion at apparently deliberate civilian killings by Russian troops in Ukraine. Zelenskiy visited Bucha on Monday after officials said the bodies of 410 civilians had been recovered from Kyiv-area towns. Officials said up to 300 people could be buried in one mass grave in Bucha.</p> <p>"There is not a single crime that they would not commit there," Zelenskiy said via video link and an interpreter. "The Russians searched for and purposely killed anyone who served our country. They shot</p>

and killed women outside their houses. They killed entire families – adults and children – and they tried to burn the bodies.”

Zelenskiy spoke of civilians “shot and killed in the back of the head after being tortured. Some of them were shot on the streets; others were thrown into the wells. So they died there in suffering.”

He added: “Civilians were crushed by tanks while sitting in their cars in the middle of the road just for their pleasure.”

The president detailed the alleged brutality of the Russian forces. “They cut off limbs, slashed their throats, women were raped and killed in front of their children. Their tongues were pulled out only because the aggressor did not hear what they wanted to hear.”

This was no different, he said, from the behaviour of Islamic State, the terrorist group notorious for its acts of cruelty in Iraq and Syria, but in this instance the perpetrator was Russia, a member of the UN security council. He urged the council to live up to its name. “It is obvious that the key institution of the world which must ensure the coercion of any aggressor to peace simply cannot work effectively.”

Zelenskiy also said Bucha was “only one of many examples of what the occupiers have been doing on our land for the past 41 days” and there were many more that the world had yet to learn the full truth about.

He accused Russia of behaving like an ancient coloniser that was abducting children and looting wealth, including gold earrings ripped from civilians’ ears. “Russia wants to turn [Ukraine](#) into silent slaves,” he said.

Speaking before he headed to Brussels for meetings of Nato and G7 foreign ministers, Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, said: “What we’ve seen in Bucha is not the random act of a rogue unit. It’s a deliberate campaign to kill, to torture, to rape, to commit atrocities. The reports are more than credible. The evidence is there for the world to see. This reinforces our determination and the determination of countries around the world to make sure that one way or another, one day or another, there is accountability for those who committed these acts, for those who ordered them.”

Peskov said remarks by Biden on Monday [calling Putin “a war criminal”](#) and demanding “a war crimes trial” were unacceptable and unworthy of a US president.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Public input sought to change place names
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3424549/as-wa-changes-racially-derogatory-place-names-alternatives-risk-erasing-women-history-of-land/
GIST	<p>Under a directive announced by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington state is set to rename 18 geographic location names that have been deemed derogatory to Native American women.</p> <p>Officially, there are six name change options for eighteen different sites in Washington state. For example, Squaw Creek Ridge could become Woody Creek. It’s part of a federal effort to change hundreds of sites in three dozen states that include the word “squaw”.</p> <p>The agency has issued its own list of alternatives. The methodology for that process involved computer-generated findings of six nearby geographic locations and nominating one as the name to replace specific locations that are slurs against Native American women.</p> <p>That runs the risk of “erasing those women and their history on the land,” as Sara Palmer, an archaeologist with the state’s natural resources department, put it to the board in a committee hearing Tuesday.</p>

	<p>“Our committee retains, under state law, our ability to review federal names as new proposals come in. We can go back and make those corrections within the boundaries of the laws and regulations under which we operate,” Palmer added.</p> <p>“I can’t sit down personally and just write a big report where I say, ‘we’re gonna do this, this, this, and this.’ It’s not what the Legislature set us up to do. We need to seek public input, right? Which is a good thing. This is an unprecedented situation.”</p> <p>To remedy the situation, Palmer recommended, to no objection, that the committee to rename the landmarks meet outside what’s regularly scheduled. However, they require the public’s input to field enough suggestions to meet the goal of retaining the history of the land once the Indigenous names are replaced.</p> <p>“We’re addressing this because we also hear that there is a second secretarial order addressing other derogatory names kind of coming down the pipe. We don’t yet exactly know how that’s going to be implemented. If this one is any indication, we may not know until we get a Federal Register notice, which is kind of exciting.”</p> <p>“We feel strongly that an effort should be made to identify the individual women or historical events or women’s activities that are commemorated by these names, and to do some public outreach.”</p> <p>Comments can be submitted, by April 25, to the Washington Department of Natural Resources.</p> <p>A listing of public outreach meetings can be found here.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Kyiv residents remain on edge
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/kyiv-residents-remain-on-edge-despite-russian-retreat-11649237401
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine—On the night Russia invaded Ukraine, Tamara and Serhiy Rynk packed their bags with a few essentials including candles, tea and medicine in preparation to flee Kyiv.</p> <p>More than a month on, the threat to Ukraine's capital has receded, but the Rynks’ bags remain ready by the door to their apartment in this northwestern district of the city.</p> <p>“We don’t trust the Russians,” Ms. Rynk said. “Nobody does.”</p> <p>The sense of imminent danger to Kyiv is fading as Russian forces draw back from the city, but residents remain on edge.</p> <p>More than half the city’s population of over three million fled after Russian troops reached the city’s outskirts in February, fearing it would be overrun. Ukrainian forces have since beaten them back and recaptured northern suburbs where mass killings in the formerly Russian-held territory are being unearthed.</p> <p>A growing number of residents are returning to Kyiv. Those who remained have emerged from subway stations and basements where they sheltered in the early days of Russia’s invasion, and now largely ignore the air-raid sirens that punctuate night and day.</p> <p>Officials are planning to reopen the road leading west out of the city, which was cut off by Russian troops. A ban on the sale of alcohol imposed in the first days of the war has been lifted. Supermarket shelves are well-stocked, though some products are hard to find because they have been stored in warehouses in areas where there is fighting. Apart from a few burnt-out vehicles on the roads, the streets are largely clean in the city’s center and municipal services are running, with trees on one street newly pruned.</p>

Yet the sense of relief in Kyiv is tempered by the war still raging in other parts of the country. Ukrainian officials are also urging caution, reminding residents the city is still within reach of Russian missiles even as [Moscow shifts its focus to the east](#).

Kyiv is heavily fortified by [its air defenses](#), which have downed Russian missiles over the city, while Ukrainian forces harassed Moscow's troops on the ground.

Even so, some 339 people have been killed as a result of Russian attacks on Kyiv, including four children, according to city council member Kseniya Semenova. Another 1,224 have been wounded and more than 150 residential buildings have been damaged.

"We do not rule out the possibility of rocket fire," said Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko. "Yes, our air-defense forces are working perfectly, but anything can happen. So I ask people to be patient and not come back."

In the city center, shops along the wide avenues are shut, their windows boarded and goods removed. On the main roads, cars weave around antitank obstacles, through checkpoints built from cinder blocks and sandbags. Trenches are still being dug along the roads' grassy shoulders.

Down side streets, residents have built their own barricades from a jumble of satellite dishes, office chairs and tires that would do little to obstruct a Russian tank. A car's front hood was spray-painted with the words: "This is our land."

At a playground in the Sviatoshynskyi district, Viktoria Liashchevska was spinning her daughter Lina on a merry-go-round—the toddler apparently oblivious to the thump of shelling in the background.

When war broke out, Ms. Liashchevska considered joining the exodus of women and children from Kyiv, but decided it would be more stressful to leave than stay. "It's important to trust your own instincts," she said.

At first she was too fearful to leave the house. But Lina became restless, so Ms. Liashchevska began taking her out to play whenever the shelling subsided. For Lina's sake, the 37-year-old pretended everything was normal. Gradually, she became accustomed to the new reality too.

Seeing Russian missiles downed by Ukraine's air defenses gave her confidence in the capital's defenses, and she saw that even cities far from the front line weren't safe from Russian strikes.

Work has dried up, however. Ms. Liashchevska and her husband are now dependent on support from a network of volunteers that has mobilized to help people in need across the city.

Many of those who stayed were older residents who were too frail to move, had nowhere to go or simply couldn't face the upheaval.

Nadia Bessarab, 68, sleeps on a foldable bed in the entrance hallway of her apartment—the most protected spot should the windows be blown in.

The TV is always on in her apartment, which is decorated with religious icons. She prays for victory over Russia and watches the news to learn what is happening elsewhere in the country and the negotiations to end the war.

"The Russians say one thing and do another," Ms. Bessarab said. "They're wiping out whole cities."

Tetiana and Volodymyr Yarosh's world has shrunk to the confines of a small apartment from which they only venture out to buy groceries. In the first days of the war, Ms. Yarosh watched an online tutorial, teaching herself how to fortify the apartment windows with Scotch tape to prevent shards of glass from flying inward in an explosion.

Like many in this city, she has learned to distinguish between the sound of outgoing and incoming fire. “We’re practically military experts,” she joked.

Their daughter and son-in-law moved to western Ukraine with their own children, but the couple remained in Kyiv to care for Ms. Yarosh’s 93-year-old mother, who paces slowly around the apartment with a cane.

The couple, who met more than four decades ago in Ms. Yarosh’s native Russia, had planned to spend their retirement at a second home outside Kyiv, but it is near an airfield and they fear it could be a target.

After the war began, Ms. Yarosh spoke to her relatives in Russia, but they wouldn’t believe what she told them: that Russia was bombarding civilians like her. They echoed [Russian propaganda](#) that the war is being fought against Nazis, so she severed contact with them.

“We have nothing in common,” she said. “They have brought so much pain and suffering and death.”

She used to speak Russian with her children, but they have only spoken Ukrainian since the war began and she is also considering no longer using her mother tongue.

“Everyone knows he won’t stop here,” she said of Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#). “[He will move on to the Baltic states and Poland](#).”

After emerging from the basement, Mr. and Mrs. Rynk returned to their apartment on the fifth floor. They had begun to adapt to the rhythms of war when a missile struck a residential block nearby, producing a shock wave that split the door of their bedroom. Many of the building’s remaining residents have since moved out.

Several blocks away, Natic Mamedov was picking through the charred interior of his apartment on the ninth floor of a building that caught fire after a fragment of a Russian missile landed next to it.

Compared with other residents of the block, Mr. Mamedov was lucky; several others were incinerated in their own homes. Mr. Mamedov was in western Ukraine at the time and learned of the fire on the news. He returned to assess the damage and salvage what he could, including a childhood photograph of his son, who is now living in London.

“We will come back and rebuild,” he said. “But first we need victory.”

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HEADLINE	04/05 Russia brutality: execution village mayor
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/execution-of-village-mayor-becomes-symbol-of-russian-brutality-in-ukraine-11649176611?mod=series_rusukrainenato
GIST	<p>MOTYZHYN, Ukraine—Mayor Olha Sukhenko took care of her village like a family for more than a decade, locals say, sprucing up public buildings, organizing concerts and settling disputes.</p> <p>When the Russian army withdrew last week after a monthlong occupation, her neighbors found Ms. Sukhenko’s lifeless body in a shallow grave, her hands bound. Her husband and son lay next to her, dead.</p> <p>Olha, Ihor and Oleksandr Sukhenko are but three of the faces of the brutal aftermath of Russia’s occupation that Ukrainian officials and villagers say left civilians dead on the street and buried under thin layers of dirt before fierce resistance drove them out.</p> <p>The 50-year-old mayor held together her central Ukrainian village, cut off and near the fighting at the front. She delivered food and medicine. And she helped the resistance, part of an undercover effort to send Russian troop positions and movements to her country’s military, Ukrainian officials and others involved say.</p>

“She was the best person until her last minute,” said Mykola Kurach, the head of the village’s volunteer defense forces who led the reconnaissance effort.

Residents say the Russian aggression against locals surged as the [Russians came under attacks](#) from Ukrainian artillery and ambush teams. The Russians shot two women while hunting for Ukrainian agents, they say. The body of another man, a security guard from the local cottage compound, was found dumped down a well.

“Those are my relatives in that pit,” said Ihor Radchenko, the Sukhenkos’ son-in-law, crouched nearby as local men began to dig the mayor’s family out on Monday. “Why were they killed? Because they were Ukrainians.”

The war came quickly to Motyzhyn, a village of some 1,000 people just off the main highway about 25 miles west of Kyiv. On Feb. 27, three days after Russia invaded, more than 100 Russian army vehicles swept through the quiet, single-lane streets.

“There are foreign bastards in our village,” Ms. Sukhenko posted on her Facebook page on the day they arrived. “Take care. Don’t leave your homes. Keep calm.”

The Russians set up a headquarters at a farm on the northeast edge of the village, digging trenches in the nearby forest where locals hunt for wild mushrooms.

Tetiana Semenova, a friend of Ms. Sukhenko who used to be mayor of the next village, urged her to leave.

“How can I leave people?” she recalls Ms. Sukhenko responding.

In Ukraine, the head of a village is “psychologist, police, priest, and many more things besides,” said Ms. Semenova, now deputy head of the Kyiv regional council. From her small office in the village council, Ms. Sukhenko would sit on her leather chair with a crocheted seat cover, flanked by a map of the village and a flag of Ukraine, adjudicating disputes such as the boundaries of vegetable plots.

Ms. Sukhenko made Motyzhyn “like a flower: pretty, cared for, clean,” said Ms. Semenova. She had the culture center and kindergarten renovated. Every year she put on a concert to celebrate the oldest and youngest in the village, to thank military veterans, and to hand out awards for the best-looking street and building.

Ms. Semenova recalls her friend’s passion for her village at a youth soccer match 15 years ago when she ran up and down the side of the pitch, turning red as she cheered on the village team and throwing her hands in the air when her son, Oleksandr, scored a goal.

“She did everything from the heart,” said Ms. Semenova.

At the start of the war, the population of the village swelled by thousands as many Kyiv residents thought they would be safer in the countryside than the capital. During the Russian occupation with dwindling supplies, many say they relied on food and medication brought personally by Ms. Sukhenko or family members. She arranged deliveries from unoccupied areas and took milk to children in a nearby village. At the start of March, she organized a convoy of civilians to evacuate the town.

Ms. Sukhenko also took on a riskier role: helping pass information on Russian troop locations and movements to the Ukrainian army.

Mr. Kurach, the 43-year-old head of the village’s volunteer defense force, moved in with the Sukhenkos after his house was damaged by shelling. He and Ms. Sukhenko’s husband, Ihor, would head out on scouting missions or “go to work,” as they called it. They and Ms. Sukhenko shared the information with Ukrainian forces via cellphone messages, according Mr. Kurach. Ukrainian army scouts visited the house for updates.

“It is dangerous for everyone, but someone needs to do it,” said Mr. Kurach.

The Russians had dug in on the edge of town in the forest with a network of trenches. Commanders were based in a small farm building nearby, according to local residents, with sacks hung over the windows to block light from getting out and giving away a target. The farm is now strewn with jars of borscht, empty alcohol bottles and juice cartons, and a book in Russian about Nostradamus.

“They were planning to be here for some time,” said Ivan Rudyak, the commander of the territorial-defense unit in a nearby village who is in charge of restoring order in Motyzhyn.

But the assault on Kyiv wasn’t going well. An initial lightning thrust had been repelled. Ukrainian forces had blown bridges and were preventing them from crossing. Attempts to surround the city were proving difficult. One attempt by Russian armored vehicles to break south of Motyzhyn failed, with at least one tank destroyed. Ukrainian artillery shelled Russian positions in the forest on the edge of Motyzhyn.

On March 18, a Ukrainian ambush team sneaked into the village and destroyed a Russian armored vehicle and truck with antitank weapons. The Russians responded with fury. The next day, they launched what they called a clearance operation through the village in search of Ukrainian agents.

Alla Loboda, a 67-year-old resident, was standing outside her front gate just after midday when a Russian armored vehicle flanked by troops with rifles appeared on her street, firing seemingly at random. Neighbors, Alina Sukhenko and her husband, saw her running toward their gate before they hid behind their house. The Russians entered their yard and fired at their car, but left after finding no one there.

The Sukhenkos, distant relatives of the mayor, crept out and saw Ms. Loboda face down by the side of the road, shot through the chest.

Neighbors buried her in her front yard, marking the grave with a wooden cross and a traditional Ukrainian embroidered cloth.

“She was such an elegant lady,” said Alina Sukhenko.

A 42-year-old villager called Yaroslava Litvynenko and her father, Mykola, ran across their yard as the Russians approached. Ms. Litvynenko fell behind, then collapsed to the ground, shot through the chest. The Russians crashed through a fence in an armored vehicle.

“Why were you running?” her father recalled them yelling.

“Why were you shooting?” he countered.

The Russians loaded her into the armored vehicle and took her to their encampment where they tried to save her. She died, and they dug a grave for her, marking it with a wooden cross and a piece of paper with her name on.

Fearful locals hung white flags and wrote “children” on their fences.

The Russians were also closing in on the intelligence operation. Mr. Kurach’s neighbors spotted drones flying over his house. Russian soldiers came and asked where he was.

In the morning on March 23, Ihor Sukhenko, the mayor’s husband, told Mr. Kurach that it was getting too dangerous and that he should leave with his wife and son. Mr. Kurach at first refused, as Ms. Sukhenko said her family would stay. So Mr. Sukhenko turned on the motor of the family car and ordered Mr. Kurach to load his family in and get out.

Minutes later, around midday, the Russians came to the mayor's house searching for Mr. Kurach. They took Oleksandr Sukhenko's silver sedan, painting a V on the side, a mark identifying Russian forces.

Ms. Sukhenko called Mr. Kurach's wife and told her they should run because the Russians were looking for them. By then, the Kurachs were already out of the village on a back road.

The Russian soldiers returned an hour later and took away the mayor and her husband and told Oleksandr that they would bring them back soon. Oleksandr called Mr. Kurach and warned him to destroy his SIM card to prevent the Russians finding and identifying him. In the evening, the Russian soldiers returned and took away Oleksandr.

At the end of March, the Ukrainian army smashed their way into the village to find most of the Russian forces already gone. The Russians appear to have packed up quickly, leaving fatigues and boots at the farm and in the trenches.

There were civilian bodies in the streets and in cars when they arrived, said Mr. Rudyak, the territorial-defense commander who is temporarily in charge of the village.

Some Ukrainian soldiers found the Sukhenkos' bodies in a shallow grave in the woods, their hands bound and bodies partially visible—a hasty burial. The soldiers scraped back some of the earth and untied their hands.

A fourth person in the grave was an army scout not from the village, residents and police said.

On Monday, police forensic teams arrived to investigate along with a team of men to dig out the bodies.

They hauled the man up who was slumped at the bottom of a well with a bruised and lacerated face and upper body.

Next they dug out Ms. Litvynenko's body from the nearby grave. Her father glanced into the hole as four men pulled her out.

"Yes," he said. "It's her."

The village is mourning its loss. Alina Sukhenko, who grew up in Motyzhyn, recalled her grandmother saying the Nazis only killed one person when they were in the village.

The Russians "looked for the strongest people," said Ms. Semenova, Ms. Sukhenko's friend. "Olha was a locomotive who pulled everyone else behind her."

"If there is no locomotive, they think we will be slaves like in Russia," she said. "But we will never be slaves."

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HEADLINE	04/05 Sanctions hit home for everyday Russians
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-war-sanctions-hit-home-for-everyday-russians-11649118196?mod=series_rusukrainenato
GIST	<p>Before Russia invaded Ukraine, Mike Bazhenov was eyeing a new MacBook for work and an SUV for his nature photography trips near Lake Baikal.</p> <p>Instead, the 30-year-old software developer bought 10 pounds of rice and buckwheat after the computer became unavailable and the price of the car doubled. He is planning to help relatives plant potatoes this year on their farm, 500 miles from his Siberian hometown of Krasnoyarsk.</p> <p>"Life is on pause now," he says.</p>

The [impact of sanctions](#) is spreading through Russia's economy, providing early indications of the pressures the country will face. Inflation has jumped, imports are growing scarce and Russians are girding for tough times. [Foreign companies halted business with Russia](#), causing job losses and hobbling industries.

Next, economists expect inventories to be depleted and unemployment to mount.

Many Russians aren't waiting. They are scrambling to get imported goods such as Nespresso pods and contact lenses, and are [stocking up on staples](#), even though stores generally remain well supplied. Their buying could speed up inflation and worsen the impact of the sanctions.

"It's standard Russian panic, instincts that are from Soviet times," said Natalia Zubarevich, an expert on the economy of Russia's regions at Moscow State University.

Mr. Bazhenov doesn't see it as panic. "I have a child. Let there be enough for a week, just in case, and in that time we can get to our relatives," Mr. Bazhenov said, adding his economic woes pale in comparison to what is happening in Ukraine.

High demand has pushed sugar prices up 46% this year. There is no shortage as Russia has [become a sugar exporter](#) over the past 20 years. But Russians remember when it was scarce and don't want to be caught short when they make jams from the fruit in their orchards. Sugar can also be used for homemade vodka, which was once a tradable commodity inside Russia.

At the cafeteria of a Moscow office of [Sberbank](#), Russia's biggest lender and [the target of U.S. sanctions](#), packets of sugar used to be piled high, a worker there said. Now employees need to ask for a packet when they get their coffee or tea. A bank spokeswoman said the story was "fake news being deliberately disseminated to increase tension around social dynamics in Russian society."

Early data show how rapidly the sanctions have hit the economy. The first independent data for March showed that Russian factories had their biggest drop in activity since the start of the pandemic. That is a sign that job losses are likely. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development projected the economy will shrink by 10% this year with no rebound in sight.

The weakening economy will make it harder financially for Russia to wage war in Ukraine. The most worrisome statistic right now is inflation, which is up 8.9% so far in 2022, according to Russian government statistics. Consumers expect prices to rise 18% over the next year, according to a central bank survey taken in March.

Consumers' expectations of more inflation have set off a cat-and-mouse game with the government. If consumers believe goods will get more expensive, they buy more now. That boosts demand and potentially pushes prices higher still.

Government officials are trying to break that cycle, arguing that inflation will be temporary. If consumers wait out the current rush, "prices for some products might even turn lower," central bank chief Elvira Nabiullina [said in a recent speech](#).

One short-term economic success: Ms. Nabiullina [stabilized the ruble](#) in recent weeks. But it came by way of [a punishing interest rate increase](#) and strict controls on [converting money into foreign currencies](#), moves that slow the economy and hem in ordinary Russians' financial ties to the outside world.

The expected increase in unemployment will force the government to boost social spending while funding the war. According to a February survey by state-run pollster VtSIOM, only a third of Russians have savings. The average monthly salary last year in Russia was 56,545 rubles, or approximately \$670, according to state statistics agency Rosstat.

Oksana Neverova, a 56-year-old pensioner in Yuzhno Sakhalinsk, a city in Russia's Far East, said the price of her favorite Vietnamese coffee is up by 50%. "It's nothing new," she said about price increases. She is expecting a boost in her pension to offset rising prices, adding she isn't worried. "Everything is totally fine," she said.

Since 2014, the country [has tried to build what analysts call Fortress Russia](#) to reduce its dependence on imports. That effort has largely failed. In 2020, imports accounted for 75% of sales of nonfood consumer goods in the Russian retail market, according to a study by the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. Studies show the self-sufficiency effort also drove prices higher.

Russian staples known as the borscht set—the vegetables needed for the beloved red-magenta colored soup—also include imports. Since the start of the year, the price of beets, cabbage, carrots and potatoes are up by double-digit percentage changes.

Vladislav Davankov, deputy chairman of the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, said on Tuesday that his New People party proposed extending holidays in May to give people time to plant orchards and improve food security for the fall. "People need to survive," he said, noting the surge in borscht set prices.

"The Russian economy right now is tied to the global economy, not just for bananas and coffee, but for things like carrots and potatoes, too," Moscow State's Ms. Zubarevich said. "We buy all of this from somewhere when there is not enough of our own."

Russian business daily Kommersant reported last week that the 2021 harvest is running out and sellers are trying to buy imported produce like young cabbages produced in Turkey, Egypt and Uzbekistan. Those cabbages haven't ripened yet, Kommersant reported.

Consumers have grown used to things like bananas. Gennadii Golovan owns two small grocery stores on Russia's Sakhalin Island, about 125 miles north of the uppermost tip of Japan. Wholesale prices for bananas rose 25% in the past few weeks and people cut their purchases, though they are now buying again, he says. Mr. Golovan benefits from a government stimulus program that gave him a free liquor license, which would normally cost 65,000 rubles, for next year.

Alexey Furnosov, an office worker, lost money when the Russian stock market plunged at the start of the war and has been watching rising prices hit his pocketbook. He now says he will plant the entire garden at his dacha in Vladimir, a historic city near Moscow, this year with potatoes and zucchini for his young child, plus tomatoes and cucumbers to marinate for the winter. At work, his boss told the staff to conserve office paper.

Russia's major cities have fared better than the rest of the country in recent years. They have also grown more entwined with the global economy. Workers have faced job losses as Western businesses shut. That has rippled across the economy.

Tatyana Androsova, a 35-year-old freelance graphic designer in the Moscow region, estimates that her income declined by about 30% to 40% in March. Her clients, including a hair salon, were worried about their own costs and business prospects. She lost another source of income when Instagram was banned by Russia. She had been doing video and photo montages on the social-media platform for small-business customers.

An urgent concern was her access to the [Adobe Inc.](#) software that is necessary for her work. She couldn't pay for it because her [Russian-issued Mastercard no longer worked outside of the country](#).

She got a friendly client in London to pay for an Adobe subscription, while she would help with graphic design in return. "It's a sort of barter," Ms. Androsova said.

HEADLINE	04/06 War sparks global scramble for cooking oils
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-war-sparks-global-scramble-for-cooking-oils-11649239342
GIST	<p>Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sparked a global shortage of sunflower oil that has in turn pushed prices of other edible oils to record highs, hitting food makers and consumers already grappling with inflation.</p> <p>Ukraine is a major producer of sunflower oil, making up over 47% of the world's exports, according to research firm Mintec. But shipments of sunflower oil—and seeds used by crushers elsewhere—have ground to a halt amid the war, disrupting supplies of a commodity widely used for cooking and as an ingredient in everyday products like margarine, mayonnaise and bread.</p> <p>The shortage of Ukrainian sunflower oil has triggered a domino effect that underscores how interconnected global commodity markets are pushing up the price of other oils produced elsewhere, including those not ordinarily considered substitutes for sunflower oil.</p> <p>The disruption comes on top of already high prices for edible oils after crop failures in Canada and South America.</p> <p>“We were already in the middle of an inflection point,” said Luciano Chiumiento, commercial director of Italian pesto maker CLAS SpA., ordinarily a major user of sunflower oil. “Then there was the war and it made everything more crazy.”</p> <p>Global sunflower oil prices were up 44% at the end of March compared with a year earlier, while rapeseed oil had risen 72%, according to market data firm Mintec Ltd. The price of soybean oil is up 41%, palm oil has gained 61% and olive oil is 15% higher. Other than olive oil, all the rest hit record high prices in March, says Mintec.</p> <p>At first, many food manufacturers switched to rapeseed oil, the easiest substitute for sunflower oil, said Gary Lewis, head of KTC Edibles Ltd., a U.K.-based seller of cooking and ingredient oils.</p> <p>Rapeseed oil prices quoted by crushers quickly jumped between 40% to 50%, Mr. Lewis said. Rapeseed supplies then soon began to run low, too. Now, KTC isn't selling either sunflower oil or rapeseed oil, he said, because they can't get hold of them.</p> <p>“The world is realizing it's not easy to take a major commodity like sunflower oil and switch to an alternative,” Mr. Lewis added.</p> <p>Sunflower oil is a popular cooking oil but also an attractive ingredient for products like mayonnaise and margarine, particularly in Europe, because of its relatively mild flavor and wide availability.</p> <p>Substituting in palm oil can be tough because it is more dense, while soy oil raises allergy risks and concerns over genetically modified organisms, said Albert McQuaid, chief science and technology officer for Irish ingredients maker Kerry Group PLC. The company is in the process of swapping sunflower for rapeseed oil in the emulsifiers it makes for mayonnaise and margarine makers.</p> <p>Olive oil, a relatively niche and expensive product, has emerged as a more unlikely substitute, executives say.</p> <p>Prices of refined olive oil generally trend about four times higher than those of sunflower oil, while global production of sunflower oil is more than seven times as large as olive oil, according to Walter Zanre, U.K. head of Italian olive oil brand Filippo Berio. The recent price jump shows how far the search for substitutes has spread, he added.</p> <p>Filippo Berio is planning on raising the prices of its olive oils globally by about 20%, with rises in some places starting in May once existing supplies run out. “Because of the scale of the increases, olive crushers are not delivering at prices contracted at in February,” said Mr. Zanre. “They are demanding the new market price in order to deliver.”</p>

For its line of pestos, of which sunflower oil is ordinarily a key ingredient, Filippo Berio is now running taste tests and shelf-life assessments to see if it can swap in rapeseed oil. Here, too, the company plans to raise prices, said Mr. Zanre.

CLAS is also exploring rapeseed oil, and soybean oil, as potential alternatives to sunflower oil, which makes up about 40% of an average pesto. Mr. Chiumiento said higher prices for all these oils mean higher prices on shelves are unavoidable.

The company is already grappling with higher energy and transport expenses, while the price of glass jars—another product usually produced in Ukraine—has jumped as much as 45%, Mr. Chiumiento said.

Since the outbreak of war in Ukraine, CLAS has increased prices on its pestos by between 30% and 50% and would need to raise prices as much as 60%-70% if it keeps product formulations the same, Mr. Chiumiento added.

As more producers substitute sunflower oil with rapeseed, the U.K.'s Food Standards Agency conducted risk assessments to test for allergies. The agency said it doesn't expect label changes to move as quickly as formulation changes, raising the risk that some consumers could unknowingly consume rapeseed. The FSA concluded the risk of allergies to rapeseed is very low.

Grocery stores in some European countries, including Belgium and Spain, have rationed sunflower oil, while British supermarket chain Iceland recently said it would include more palm oil in its products because of the sunflower oil shortage.

Iceland said it made its decision with "huge regret" after having pledged in 2018 to remove palm oil from its own-label products because of concerns about deforestation.

"The only alternative to using palm oil under the current circumstances would simply be to clear our freezers and shelves of a range of staples including frozen chips and other potato products," Iceland's Managing Director Richard Walker wrote in a blog post.

Ukraine, whose national flower is the sunflower, has been a major exporter of the oil pressed from the plant's seeds for decades. Global agricultural trading houses including Cargill Inc., [Archer Daniels Midland](#) Co. and [Bunge](#) Ltd. invested in ports, grain facilities and processing plants in the Black Sea area since at least the early 2000s.

Since the war, Bunge, ADM and Cargill have all suspended their Ukrainian sunflower refining operations.

Much of Ukraine's sunflower oil exports—like its sizable grain shipments—are sent to developing countries, [where higher food prices will have an outsize impact on poorer consumers](#).

India, for instance, is the world's largest importer of edible oils, sourcing most of its sunflower oil from Ukraine. India also gets its sunflower oil from Russia, the world's second-largest exporter, which has said it would introduce export quotas starting later this month. Russia has also said it would ban the export of sunflower and rape seeds from April until the end of August to protect domestic supply as prices surge.

India also imports palm oil from Indonesia, which has said its palm oil producers must sell 30% of what was earmarked for exports domestically in an attempt to contain cooking oil prices.

As planting season approaches, U.S. growers spying an opportunity amid soaring prices could increase sunflower seed output by 30%-40%, according to John Sandbakken, head of the National Sunflower Association. Growers should be motivated to shift to sunflowers from other crops that command a less attractive price, he added.

	<p>Still, analysts don't expect any U.S. increase to significantly ease price pressure given the country accounts for a tiny slice of exports and typically sends its sunflower oil to countries like Mexico and Canada that don't rely on Ukrainian imports. The European Union, Argentina and Turkey are the world's third, fourth and fifth largest producers of sunflower oil respectively.</p> <p>Some other sunflower oil-producing countries are refusing to sell or even quote prices in the hope that prices could rise further still, according to Mr. Zandre and other buyers. Even when they do, there will still be gaps in the market.</p> <p>"There simply isn't sufficient sunflower oil in the rest of the world to cover the Ukrainian shortfall," Mr. Zandre said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Czech Republic sends tanks to Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-quietly-receives-tanks-from-czech-republic-to-support-war-effort-11649160666
GIST	<p>The Czech Republic has been sending old Soviet-designed tanks into Ukraine, providing badly needed heavy weapons to outgunned Ukrainian troops that are battling a much better-equipped Russian invasion force.</p> <p>The efforts, described by three Czech and Slovak officials, mark the first time a foreign country has provided tanks to Ukraine since Russia's invasion began Feb. 24. In a potentially even more important development, both the Czech Republic and neighboring Slovakia, which shares a border with Ukraine, are considering opening their military industrial installations to repair and refit damaged Ukrainian military equipment.</p> <p>Ukraine has captured 176 Russian tanks, 34 self-propelled artillery pieces, 116 armored fighting vehicles, 149 infantry fighting vehicles, 23 multiple-rocket launchers, and 45 armored personnel carriers, according to Oryx, an open-source intelligence blog that only counts visual evidence of equipment capture. Many, if not most, of these pieces—as well as a large number of Ukraine's own tanks and fighting vehicles—would need to be repaired before use.</p> <p>Russia's campaign of missile strikes across Ukraine has targeted in particular the country's defense industry, destroying facilities where such repairs and refitting could take place—something that makes the Czech and Slovak cooperation particularly valuable.</p> <p>Western governments initially expected Kyiv to fall within a few days, and equipped the Ukrainian military mostly with shoulder-fired missiles such as NLAW, Javelin and Stinger that could be used by small insurgent units. The Ukrainian military, however, has managed to prevail over Russian forces around Kyiv in a large-scale conventional war, using long-range artillery, tanks and aircraft. It is now trying to stop Russia from advancing in the eastern Donbas region and to reclaim Russian-occupied areas in the south of the country—missions that President Volodymyr Zelensky has said would be impossible without a steady supply of heavy weapons.</p> <p>A donor's conference of some 35 nations, convened by the U.K. in London last week, agreed to supply Ukraine with long-range artillery, antiaircraft systems and infantry fighting vehicles, but stopped short of endorsing the transfer of tanks.</p> <p>So far, the Czech Republic has sent slightly more than a dozen modernized, Soviet-designed T-72M tanks, said Czech defense ministry officials. The Central European country has also sent howitzer artillery pieces and BMP-1 amphibious tracked infantry fighting vehicles to Ukraine, officials said.</p> <p>These weapons supplies were funded by the Czech government, and private Czech donors who have chipped in to a government-backed crowdsourced fundraising campaign to arm Ukraine. Officials on NATO's eastern flank generally worry that Western weapons and ammunition supply fall far short of what</p>

Ukraine needs considering the intensity of the war. In one day, Ukraine uses about as much weaponry as it receives in a week, a senior Polish official said.

NATO countries are [looking to supply additional and more-advanced weapons systems](#), such as air-defense systems and U.S. Javelin antitank weapons, the alliance's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Tuesday. He said allies are already supplying Kyiv with fuel, ammunition, helmets, protective gear and medical supplies. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization expects Russian troops to make a big push in Ukraine's southeast in coming weeks and wants to quickly resupply Kyiv's troops, Mr. Stoltenberg said.

Central European governments, with the notable exception of Hungary, are broadly eager to help rearm Ukraine, but some officials are nervous about depleting their own stockpiles of weapons and ammunition.

Several of those governments are turning to the Biden administration for assurances that the U.S. will help replace equipment they are donating to Ukraine. Czech supplies were reduced in 2014, when back to back explosions destroyed two warehouses holding more than 150 tons of ammunition. The government later blamed the blast on two agents from Russia's military intelligence service.

"Much more, several times more, can be done if we join forces with other allies," said Czech Deputy Defense Minister Tomáš Kopečný.

Slovenia, avowedly supportive of Kyiv, has been sending available military equipment to Ukraine from the beginning of the Russian aggression, its Prime Minister Janez Jansa told the Journal, to a point where it has run through its own stockpiles.

"If France, Germany or U.S. sent the same share per capita, Ukraine is already liberated," he said.

"Unfortunately, our reserves are depleted and now we try to replace equipment...with new delivery from U.S.," he said. "Unfortunately, all procedures were slow, but [have] accelerated somehow after Bucha massacre."

Moscow has warned that it considers arms shipments legitimate targets. So far, however, it hasn't been able to choke off the daily military shipments to Ukraine from Poland, Romania or Slovakia. Russia's air force, so far, also hasn't demonstrated the capacity to disrupt military convoys between the border and front-line staging areas.

Poland, the staging ground for most of the weaponry going into Ukraine, also has a large collection of T-72 tanks, and is expecting a fresh delivery of 250 American Abrams tanks. Asked if Warsaw would provide the Soviet-designed tanks, Jakub Kumoch, the head of the International Policy Bureau in President Andrzej Duda's office said, "Every conversation regarding whatever support for Ukraine is a conversation taking place between Poland and its closest allies, taking into account the needs of Ukraine and taking into account the aspiration to end as quickly as possible the war."

One road has been effectively closed off to NATO weapon shipments, however: the route through Hungary, whose Prime Minister Viktor Orban was re-elected Sunday after vowing to block NATO from using his country to transport weapons to Ukraine.

Australia said this week it is flying Bushmaster armored vehicles to Europe for delivery to Ukraine, with the first four already painted in Ukrainian colors.

Beyond tanks, Central European governments, including the Czech Republic, are weighing the risks of letting Ukraine bring war-damaged equipment into their countries for repairs. Slovakia, which has no tanks available to give, has discussed the issue, a senior Slovak official said.

Those deliberations are part of a realization that Russia's war with Ukraine could drag on for months if not longer—and that, in a war of attrition, Russia's overwhelming advantage in equipment could tilt the scales in Moscow's favor.

	“If the war is going to get longer and longer, the war equipment that is being damaged needs to get serviced,” said a Czech defense ministry official. “Ukrainian repair houses are 100% busy, and they are asking other nearby allies to help them with repairs.”
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HEADLINE	04/05 Law enforcement frustrated lack of support
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/they-feel-vilified-law-enforcement-frustrated-by-lack-of-support-former-officer-says-national-police-association-fraternal-order-of-police-violence-shootings-sgt-betsy-smith
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (TND) — The uptick in violence against men and women in blue has many in the law enforcement industry trying to combat crime while protecting officers on the job.</p> <p>The National Police Association's Sgt. Betsy Smith, a 29-year veteran of the force, broke down why community support for law enforcement or the lack thereof varies so much between cities across America.</p> <p>“We spoke to law enforcement officers today and in Texas, they feel very supported but then you go to, you know, Chicago, New York, L.A., Portland, Seattle, any of the larger urban areas they don't feel so supported and in fact, they feel vilified,” Smith said.</p> <p>The National Fraternal Order of Police reports that more than 100 officers have been shot so far in 2022 and ambush style attacks on police officers is up 36% from this time last year. Smith says she feels mainstream media is contributing to the problem by pushing the idea that police are dangerous.</p> <p>“We have contact with 50 to 80 million people each year,” Smith said. “We only use force against about 1.1% of those people that we end up arresting. So most law enforcement-citizen contact does not involve any sort of violence and of those 10 million people we arrest, we rarely use force against them. But we have media and politicians saying that we are the problem and we are the danger. That has to stop.”</p> <p>Last week, President Joe Biden outlined the administration's proposed budget that included \$20.6 billion to the Department of Justice's spending on federal law enforcement, a \$2 billion increase from the current fiscal year.</p> <p>“I would like to see that money go to equipment and gear including communication systems for a lot of agencies who need that. We were being outgunned. We need additional firearms and with that goes firearms training and we need officer survival training. We can't put all this money behind teaching officers preferred pronouns and things like that. We've got to have officer safety training that helps keep those cops alive to continue to serve and protect and go home to their families,” she said.</p> <p>Many cities are also facing staffing shortages due to officers leaving the force.</p> <p>“We are having difficulty recruiting new people to the profession and a lot of officers who leave they go to another more law enforcement friendly area,” Smith said. “New York, Chicago, Seattle, Portland, L.A. — those officers do not feel supported and so of course, they're not going to stay on the job or be attracted to it. If you have to worry about getting indicted and all those arrests you make are never prosecuted, why would anyone want to stay on this job?”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Some remote work returns; high gas prices
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/high-gas-prices-have-some-returning-to-remote-work-oil-inflation-driving-commute-cars-money-work-from-home
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (TND) — Higher gas prices are causing yet another shift in the American workforce. Just as workers started returning to the office post-pandemic, some are once again working remotely to save gas money.</p>

Despite the nation's fuel prices slowly coming down, it's still putting a serious strain on wallets. As Americans re-start their routines in the office, the gas pump sticker shock is hitting those with longer commutes especially hard.

"We get calls daily like 'what type of remote jobs are you working?' The gas prices have exacerbated that," said Matt Becker, owner of staffing agency PrideStaff.

Becker says when gas hit \$4 per gallon, his clients and staff took notice.

"Even if they don't necessarily want to work from home, you're seeing people who before would say, 'Hey, I'm happy to commute 30 minutes for work' are saying 'no, no, no I'm only going to commute 15,'" Becker said.

President Joe Biden called for a return to the office during his State of the Union.

"It's time for Americans to get back to work and fill our great downtowns again. People working from home can feel safe and begin to return to their offices," Biden said.

But fuel costs jumped more than 20% in early March, pushing prices up 50% from a year ago.

"And then when you put on top not just the rising gas prices but the rising food prices and the rising rent— when you look at the staples that is in everyone's lives — all of this collectively is going to have a major, dramatic impact if we don't get it under control," Becker said.

One small business owner in Texas is giving his employees a boost to help offset the rising cost of commuting. He's pledging a \$50 gift card every two weeks until prices at the pump stabilize.

"I've always believed in taking care of our employees so that they can take care of customers and if you take care of customers you're never going to have to worry about the bottom line," said Greg Perkins, owner of Oakridge Bellows.

Other companies are getting creative as well. Google brought its employees back this week, offering thousands of workers a free electric scooter for transportation.

While gas prices are keeping some workers at home, other companies are relying on a hybrid home-office schedule now.

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HEADLINE	04/05 OPA: SPD use-of-force complaints drop
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/seattle-police-use-of-force-allegations-dropped-since-2020-opa-report-finds
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Allegations of an overuse of force by Seattle Police (SPD) were down 61% in 2021 compared to 2020—a major takeaway from the Office of Police Accountability's (OPA) Annual Report, released on Tuesday.</p> <p>Office received 2,866 contacts from the public which resulted in the opening of 558 cases, a drop of 28% cases from 2020. More than half—52%—of those cases were investigated, and of those cases, the OPA sustained 26% of those allegations.</p> <p>The report says there were 140 use-of-force allegations in 2021, a drop of 61% from 2020, when there were 358.</p> <p>2020 was a year that saw many protests over police brutality, the Capitol Hill Occupied Protest, and the Black Lives Matter and Defund the Police movements.</p>

By comparison, both years are well below 2019, where there were 452 allegations of excessive use of force.

"SPD is also encouraged by the decline in Use of Force allegations" says a statement by SPD Communications. "SPD will strive to improve in all areas and appreciates the oversight of its community partners, including the OPA."

The report says two officers were terminated by the Seattle interim Police Chief Adrian Diaz as a result of disciplinary findings made by the OPA. Other officers in line for termination due to OPA findings quit before the termination could take place.

The two officers fired by Diaz were involved in the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Seattle City Council member Lisa Herbold, who chairs the council's Public Safety Committee, took issue with some demographic numbers in the report.

The report identified who was making the complaints. It said 27% of those filing complaints were Black/African American, which was an increase from 22% in 2020 and 23% in 2019.

Herbold notes that Seattle's population has 7% Black/African American residents.

"I am concerned that the racial disproportionality in OPA cases has continued to increase over previous years" said Herbold. "I thank SPD for their work implementing OPA's management recommendations. Management action recommendations were made in 22 policy areas, and nine are fully or partially implemented, and ten are in progress. This is how SPD—working with OPA—is proactive in preventing future misconduct."

Diaz did not follow the 2021 recommendation to discipline a lieutenant who gave the order to pepper spray and tear gas a crowd of protestors during what's been called the "[pink umbrella incident](#)" on June 1, 2020.

It was the only OPA disciplinary recommendation in 2021 that Diaz did not follow. Instead, he demoted an assistant chief who was an incident commander during that time.

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HEADLINE	04/05 More Alaska cruise tours thru Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/cruise-industry-increases-alaska-tours-through-seattle
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The 2022 cruise season in Seattle is just kicking off. This year, more than a million passengers are expected pass through our region, and more cruise ships are scheduled to sail to Alaska by way of Seattle.</p> <p>Industry leaders believe thousands of jobs and nearly one billion dollars in economic impact are at stake. The start for most cruises towards Alaska mostly begin from Seattle's Elliott Bay.</p> <p>"Seattle is vital," said Tyler Hickman, Icy Strait Point vice president.</p> <p>Port of Seattle says cruise ships will make nearly 300 calls into Seattle this season, while 14 vessels call Puget Sound their home port.</p> <p>More than 5,000 jobs are created both locally and regionally thanks to the cruise industry. But, also hoping for economic recovery are communities in Alaska.</p> <p>Icy Strait Point is just one Alaskan destination from Seattle. The nearby small town of Hoonah is also counting on recovery.</p>

	<p>"We continue to build and make Icy Strait Point better and better," said Hickman.</p> <p>As the only privately-owned Alaskan cruise destination, Icy Strait Point offers tourists a chance to see untamed wilderness from their porthole.</p> <p>Icy Strait Point spent the past year expanding including a new mountain gondola.</p> <p>Cruise lines are eager to set sail into Alaska this season. Passengers can also catch deals as operators seek to rebound from two years of Covid struggles.</p> <p>For those sailing to Icy Strait Point, the promise of Alaskan wilderness awaits.</p> <p>"The expansion of Seattle is only good for Alaska," Hickman said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 US warns major economic consequences
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/business/yellen-russia-ukraine-sanctions.html
GIST	<p>Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen plans on Wednesday to warn of major consequences for the global economy as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with both the conflict and global sanctions imposed in response to Russia's aggression disrupting the flow of food and energy around the world.</p> <p>The comments by Ms. Yellen, who will appear before a House committee on Wednesday, come as the United States and the European Union are poised to announce another round of sanctions on Russian financial institutions, government officials and state-owned enterprises as the war in Ukraine shows no sign of abating.</p> <p>"Russia's actions represent an unacceptable affront to the rules-based, global order, and will have enormous economic repercussions in Ukraine and beyond," Ms. Yellen will say at a Financial Services Committee hearing, according to her prepared remarks.</p> <p>Ms. Yellen will make clear that the United States has no intention of easing the economic pressure it is exerting on Russia through sanctions on its central bank, financial institutions and leaders. Ms. Yellen plans to emphasize that more than half of the world economy is united in the effort to impose sanctions on Russia and that the Biden administration is working to ensure that Russia does not benefit from financing available through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.</p> <p>"Treasury is committed to holding Russia accountable for its actions so it cannot benefit from the international financial system," Ms. Yellen plans to tell lawmakers.</p> <p>Ms. Yellen also plans to underscore how the war in Ukraine is causing global food prices to surge amid disruptions to wheat exports, casting the effect as especially problematic for poor countries. She will also argue that Russia's actions are a reminder to invest in energy independence so the world is not reliant on such nations for oil and gas.</p> <p>"We are witnessing the vulnerability that comes from relying on one fuel source or one trade partner, which is why it is imperative to diversify energy sources and suppliers," Ms. Yellen will say.</p> <p>The economic disruption is taking place at a fragile moment, as the global economy emerges from the coronavirus pandemic, which has snarled supply chains and fueled inflation.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 New cooperation for hypersonic weapons
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/05/world/ukraine-russia-war#after-russian-advances-us-britain-and-australia-expand-partnership-to-develop-hypersonic-missiles

The United States, Australia and Britain announced on Tuesday that they were bolstering their cooperation on developing new hypersonic weapons, an expansion of an agreement reached last year to build new nuclear-powered submarines.

Hypersonic weapons, which maneuver at several times the speed of sound, can potentially evade missile defense systems and quickly strike a target even if it is on the other side of the world.

The announcement is an attempt to jump-start the work of the United States and two key allies at a time when Russia and China have made important advances in developing and fielding hypersonic weapons.

Russia and China have invested heavily in hypersonic technology, and by some measures have moved ahead of the United States and its allies. Last August, China [tested a hypersonic missile](#) that circled the globe twice before hitting its target.

Russia [announced in 2019 that it had deployed a hypersonic missile](#), and it has used the technology in an attack on a weapons depot in the war in Ukraine. Though it is clear Russia has fielded the weapons, it remains to be seen what tactical advantages superfast missiles have given Russian forces in Ukraine.

Hypersonic speed is defined as faster than Mach 5, or 3,806 miles per hour, far beyond the speed of sound, which is about 761 miles per hour.

The Pentagon and the Air Force have worked on hypersonics for some 20 years, [including a push that began in the first decade of this century](#). In recent years, as China and Russia have increased their work on hypersonics, so too has the Pentagon, requesting \$3.8 billion for researching the technology in the current fiscal year.

The announcement on Tuesday by the three countries was short on specifics, saying only that the “partners will work together to accelerate development of advanced hypersonic and counter-hypersonic capabilities.”

The earlier announcement said the three countries would cooperate to develop nuclear submarines, and it was framed as an effort to counter China’s growing power in the Pacific and elsewhere. The announcement on Tuesday said the importance of the partnership had “only grown in response to Russia’s unprovoked, unjustified and unlawful invasion of Ukraine.”

In addition to working on nuclear reactors and hypersonic weapons, the three countries are also accelerating investments and experiments in quantum computing, artificial intelligence, cybercapabilities, electronic warfare and other technologies.

According to the announcement, the additional areas of research also include smart robots meant to enhance undersea surveillance. The autonomous underwater vehicles, it said, “will be a significant force multiplier for our maritime forces.” Initial sea trials are planned for 2023.

Expanding work in those technologies — and [protecting American know-how against espionage attempts](#) — has been a priority of the Biden administration. U.S. officials believe that without a more concentrated effort, the United States could fall behind China in technologies that will be important to the economy as well as to military strength.

At a hearing before the House Armed Services Committee on Tuesday, Republicans suggested that China and Russia were ahead of the United States in developing hypersonics. Lloyd J. Austin III, the secretary of defense, initially avoided a direct response. But when Representative Matt Gaetz, Republican of Florida, tried to link delays in fielding hypersonic weapons with a purported embrace of socialism by the Pentagon, Mr. Austin shot back.

He denied that the Pentagon embraced socialism and asked: “What do you mean we are behind in hypersonics?”

At another point in the hearing, Mr. Austin said the work with Australia and Britain on hypersonics, artificial intelligence and other technology was “coming along really, really well.” The priority of developing hypersonic weapons — and defenses against them — was clear, he added.

“I have engaged industry and asked them to make sure that they’re leaning into this issue of hypersonic development,” Mr. Austin said. “Most importantly, I’ve asked them to make sure that they’re working with us on how we’re going to defend ourselves with respect to hypersonics.”

William Roper, a former senior Air Force official, said the United States historically had not invested enough in hypersonics.

“Hypersonics bring unique battlefield advantages, and China’s progress has been impressive,” he said. “Leveraging the advantage we enjoy in close allies and partners is a uniquely American way to close the gap. But more broadly, the U.S. must avoid responding to every Chinese military advancement symmetrically — that is a cost-imposing path we can ill afford.”

The broader nuclear-powered submarines deal infuriated France because it had been [negotiated in secret](#) and scuttled a large submarine contract that Paris had signed with Australia.

Britain is included in the new plan because the compact nuclear reactors for the Australian submarines will probably use the unusual designs of American and British submarines, which are powered by bomb-grade, highly enriched uranium. The United States has not shared the potent technology with other major allies because, if diverted, it could fuel nuclear arms.

The announcement said the three partner nations have engaged proactively with the International Atomic Energy Agency on the deal’s nonproliferation aspects. Rafael Mariano Grossi, the agency’s director general, [told its board of governors](#) on March 7 that Australia, Britain and the United States “are committed to ensuring the highest nonproliferation and safeguards standards are met.”

The Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny said Russia’s state media bore much of the blame for alleged atrocities by Russian forces in Ukraine because of how much hatred they had sowed. In a social media post from prison, he called for international sanctions against Russian state television channels.

“The propagandists are creating a public opinion that no longer just allows Putin to commit war crimes but demands them of him,” he wrote.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Some Ukraine refugees return despite risks
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/world/europe/ukraine-refugee-war-return.html
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine — From her bearing and demeanor, the college instructor waiting at the Lviv bus station appeared to be accustomed to respect and, judging by her fur-trimmed coat and pink mohair hat adorned with a sparkling pin, used to a certain elegance.</p> <p>But after two weeks on the road as a refugee with her daughter and 1-year-old grandson, she had had enough.</p> <p>In Poland and the Czech Republic, Oksana, who did not want to give her last name, said she was just another refugee in a shelter who did not speak the language.</p> <p>“Nobody needs us,” she said. “Nobody needs teachers. Knowing the Czech language is obligatory. They would be ready to take me as a cleaning lady, but even then I would need to find a place to live.”</p> <p>Now she and her family were joining the growing number of Ukrainians who were returning home.</p>

For the first time since the Russian invasion six weeks ago, an increasing number of travelers coming through the western Ukrainian city of Lviv and other transit hubs are returning home rather than fleeing.

There are still far more citizens leaving their homes. But according to travelers and officials, the surge in returnees reflects a growing belief that the war could last years, and a willingness to live with a measure of danger rather than live as a refugee in another country, bereft of home and community.

It also highlights the difficulties European countries have had providing for Ukrainians in the continent's biggest refugee crisis since World War II.

"The statistics have changed a lot recently," Yuri Buchko, the deputy military administrator for Lviv, said in an interview. "In the beginning of the war 10 times the number of people left as those who returned." Now, he said, on some days half of those crossing the border in Lviv Province were returning home rather than leaving.

The returnees are largely women and children. Most Ukrainian men of military age with fewer than three children were banned from leaving the country at the start of the war. At the border with Poland, virtually all the drivers of civilian cars crossing the border are women. The trains and bus stations are packed with women and children.

"People have now understood what war is like and that even with war, you can stay and live in Ukraine, in Lviv," Mr. Buchko said. "They left at the beginning because of the panic, but they have family members still here."

He said Ukrainians were also returning to go back to work as more shops and businesses reopened.

On Saturday, a fairly typical day, 18,000 Ukrainians left the country, while 9,000 crossed back again through border posts in his province, he said. He said that while some were traders transporting goods, many were Ukrainian families intending to go home. Figures from Ukraine's border guard confirm the trend.

More than four million Ukrainians have fled the country since the war began, and more than seven million have fled their homes but remained in Ukraine.

Many who stayed in the country had evacuated to Lviv and to other cities and towns closer to the Polish border, which were thought to be safer than cities in the south and east.

Recent rocket attacks in Lviv, including on a military training base and an oil installation, killed several dozen people but for the most part the city has remained untouched.

Travelers and officials said that some people were returning to the capital, Kyiv, because of the Russian retreat there.

At Lviv's ornate century-old train station, Valeria Yuriivna stood on the platform about to board a train to Mykolaiv, which remains under heavy fire from Russian airstrikes. Her 14-year-old daughter and their dog were already on the train. Her eldest daughter was waiting for her at home in Mykolaiv.

Ms. Yiriivna, a government employee, said they had been terrified by Russian shelling, which shook their apartment building. But she said it had been difficult staying with friends in Lviv with her daughter and dog for an entire month.

"They have been bombing hospitals in Mykolaiv," she said. "They need people to help, to cover the windows with blast film. I am going back to volunteer."

She and others said they were worried that something would happen to the railway, preventing them from getting home.

When an air-raid siren sounded at the train station late Monday night, a crush of travelers headed underground to await the all-clear sign: weary mothers dragging suitcases while holding crying children, city dwellers with small dogs in their arms, an opera singer returning from a concert in Poland.

Most of the frequent air-raid sirens in this historic city mark the presence of Russian fighter jets heading for targets in eastern Ukraine.

Yurii Savchuck, a conductor, directed passengers to their train cars. A medical team ran frantically up the stairs carrying a frail older woman in a wheelchair, rushing to get her on the train in time.

“For the last couple of days more people have been going home,” said Mr. Savchuck, a 20-year veteran of the Ukrainian railroad. “Not everyone has the money to stay abroad for long. Also Kyiv was liberated and people want to see if their houses are destroyed.”

At the headquarters of Lviv’s military administration, Mr. Buchko and his staff emerged from a bunker after the latest all-clear. More than a month into the war, the sirens were so routine that employees were sitting on benches chatting, sharing jokes and talking on their phones. He and other officials were making plans to reopen more businesses so more Ukrainians could return and get back to work.

“At the beginning of the war, we were understanding or hoping that this war would last for a week or probably a few days,” he said “Right now we see that it’s going to last not for months probably, but for several years. And we have to live with that.”

At the bus station on Sunday, Oksana and her family were trying to find a taxi to the train station to go to their home to Dnipro, in eastern Ukraine, despite the fact that it has recently been hit by Russian missiles. But life as a refugee seemed worse.

“We were roaming for more than two weeks,” Oksana said. “From Poland to the Czech Republic then back to Poland and then here.”

“We were staying in a small center in the Czech Republic,” said her daughter Halyna, who is also a college instructor. “You need to do everything for yourself and everything is in Czech so you can’t understand it.”

In Poland they moved into a hotel after living in a shelter for two days but then ran out of money.

“It was difficult,” Halyna said. “Everyone was in the same room. Poland especially was very helpful with food and other things but we had no place to live.”

Others arriving by bus from Poland said the Poles had been very welcoming but were overwhelmed by the number of people arriving.

“Everyone there wants to come home,” Oksana said.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Study: 2nd booster helps but wanes quickly
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/05/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine#a-second-booster-helped-protect-older-people-from-omicron-infection-but-waned-quickly-an-israeli-study-says
GIST	<p>A second booster shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid vaccine provides additional short-term protection against Omicron infections and severe illness among older adults, according to a large new study from Israel.</p> <p>But the booster’s effectiveness against infection in particular wanes after just four weeks and almost disappears after eight weeks. Protection against severe illness did not ebb in the six weeks after the extra</p>

dose, but the follow-up period was too short to determine whether a second booster provided better long-term protection against severe disease than a single booster.

The study focused on adults ages 60 and older, and did not provide data on the effectiveness of a second booster in younger populations.

The findings, published on Tuesday in the New England Journal of Medicine, suggest that additional boosters are likely to provide fleeting protection against Omicron infections in older recipients, and are consistent with evidence that vaccine effectiveness against infection wanes faster than against severe disease.

“For confirmed infection, a fourth dose appeared to provide only short-term protection and a modest absolute benefit,” the researchers wrote.

The results come in the midst of a debate over [whether and when Americans might need additional boosters](#). The Food and Drug Administration [is convening a panel of outside advisers](#) on Wednesday to discuss the broader U.S. booster strategy.

The rapid spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant, which can evade some of the body’s immune defenses, has intensified the discussion of whether second boosters are broadly necessary.

Last month, the F.D.A. [authorized second booster shots](#) of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines for adults ages 50 and older, as well as immunocompromised people ages 12 and older. The agency also authorized an mRNA booster for adults who have already received two doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

It’s likely to be a tough sell: While 66 percent of Americans have been vaccinated, [just 30 percent have](#) received a booster shot.

It is clear that the Omicron variant [has blunted the effectiveness of Covid vaccines](#), but data on the benefits of a second booster remains limited. A previous study from Israel, which has not yet been published in a scientific journal, found that older adults who received a second booster [were 78 percent less likely](#) to die of Covid-19 than those who had received just one booster shot.

But scientists criticized the study’s methodology, and the benefits of a second booster for young, healthy adults are less clear. Some experts note that most adults who have been vaccinated and boosted once [are already likely to be protected](#) from severe illness and death.

On Jan. 2, Israel authorized a fourth dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for adults ages 60 and older and members of other high-risk populations who had received their third shots at least four months earlier. Israel’s vaccination campaign has relied heavily on the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

The new study is based on records from the Israeli Ministry of Health on more than 1.2 million older adults who were eligible for the fourth shot between Jan. 10 and March 2, when Omicron was the dominant variant in the country.

The researchers compared the rate of confirmed virus infections and cases of severe Covid-19 among those who had received a fourth dose to those who had received just three doses.

Protection against infection appeared to peak four weeks after the fourth shot: the rate of confirmed infections was twice as high in the three-dose group as in the four dose group. By eight weeks after the fourth shot, however, the additional protection against infection had almost disappeared, the researchers found.

Rates of severe disease were 3.5 times higher in the three-dose group than the four-dose group four weeks after the booster shot, the researchers found. That protection did not appear to wane and actually ticked up

slightly by the sixth week after the shot, when rates of severe disease were 4.3 times higher in the three-dose group.

But the study covered a relatively short period, and whether the benefits against illness hold up over the longer term remains unknown. The study did not report data on deaths.

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HEADLINE	04/05 CDC encourages 2nd booster to older people
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/05/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine#cdc-second-boosters
GIST	<p>Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said Tuesday that her agency “really would encourage people who are over 50 who have underlying medical conditions and those over the age of 65” to get a second booster shot.</p> <p>Her remarks at a White House briefing were her clearest statement to date on who should get what for most people amounts to a fourth shot against the coronavirus.</p> <p>Last week, the Food and Drug Administration authorized a second booster of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna’s vaccines for everyone over 50 and many immunocompromised people, four months after the first booster. At the time, Dr. Walensky said that the option was “especially important” for those over 65, as well as for those over 50 with chronic health problems, such as diabetes or obesity. Still, before Tuesday’s briefing, some health experts said they were unsure whether to recommend the second booster for those groups.</p> <p>“I think there is confusion,” said Dr. Jose Romero, Arkansas’s health secretary who chairs the C.D.C.’s outside expert advisory committee on vaccine policy. He said leaders of some other state health departments had voiced the same reaction.</p> <p>“It’s been a bit of a challenge for our communications department to work out the infographic on how to explain” who should get the second booster and with what vaccine, Dr. Romero added.</p> <p>The decision to offer a second booster continues to generate controversy, with some immunologists and vaccine experts arguing that the federal government lacked enough data to justify the move, at least for those younger than 65. Some of that criticism will likely be aired on Wednesday at a public meeting of the F.D.A.’s outside advisory committee of experts where the broader U.S. booster strategy is set to be discussed.</p> <p>At least 30 million Americans are now eligible for a second booster dose, including 10 million individuals ages 50 through 64 years, and 20 million individuals ages 65 years and older, a C.D.C. spokesman said.</p> <p>Federal regulators initially leaned toward giving everyone 60 or 65 and older the option of a second booster, based heavily on data from Israel, which has been offering the additional shot to those 60 and older since early January. They decided to include people as young as 50, they said last week, because about one-third of Americans between 50 and 65 have serious health problems.</p> <p>Dr. Peter Marks, who is in charge of vaccine regulation for the F.D.A., has said that trying to limit eligibility to certain people with chronic conditions would have been too confusing.</p> <p>In an interview on the podcast “In the Bubble” this week, he said, “Unfortunately, medical comorbidities are often in the eye of the beholder.” Some people with such conditions don’t realize it, he said, while others may claim to suffer from them when they actually don’t.</p> <p>Federal regulators said people could pick between the two brands of mRNA vaccines for their second booster regardless of their first booster’s brand. Asked on the podcast whether people should choose a different booster than their earlier shots, Dr. Marks said that while there was “a little bit of data” that</p>

	<p>switching vaccines may provide better protection, “probably the more important thing is just to get boosted with whatever vaccine you can get.”</p> <p>Dr. Nirav D. Shah, head of Maine’s state health agency and president of the Association of State and Territorial Health officials, said regulators were right to make age the only criteria this time. When the federal government rolled out the first booster shots in the fall, he said, the C.D.C.’s eligibility criteria, with age and health conditions both as factors, baffled many people.</p> <p>He said he tried to further simplify the C.D.C.’s guidance on second boosters last week for Maine residents. “I tried to remedy some of the confusion with clarity on our part,” he said.</p> <p>The day after the C.D.C. updated its guidelines, he said, “I just went on Twitter and said, ‘You know what, if you’re eligible, you should just do it.’”</p> <p>In Maine, the uptake has been brisk. “Our vaccination numbers shot up over the last couple days,” Dr. Shah said.</p> <p>Not in Arkansas. “This is a trickle, a trickle,” Dr. Romero said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Shanghai defends separating kids for Covid
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/05/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine#shanghai-defends-separating-infected-children-from-uninfected-parents
GIST	<p>Shanghai officials have responded to days of public outcry about a policy of separating children who test positive for the coronavirus from their parents, clarifying that parents who also test positive will be allowed to stay with their children.</p> <p>But they said they would continue to separate children from parents who were not infected, citing national virus control guidelines in a country bent on eliminating domestic transmission.</p> <p>The announcement, at a news conference on Monday, followed days of online fury and accusations that officials’ response to the virus was worse than the virus itself. Shanghai is battling its worst outbreak since the pandemic began, having logged more than 70,000 cases since the Omicron variant began tearing through the city last month.</p> <p>As officials raced to contain the virus, photos and video began circulating over the weekend of young children crying at a Shanghai hospital. Some photos showed multiple children sharing a crib in what appeared to be a hallway of the hospital. Even parents who also tested positive reported being unable to see their hospitalized children.</p> <p>The hospital, the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center, later issued a statement confirming that the photos were real, though it disputed that they showed an infant isolation facility.</p> <p>On Monday, city officials more directly addressed “the issue everyone is paying attention to, of parental accompaniment.”</p> <p>“We have clarified that if parents have also tested positive, they can stay in the same place as their child to accompany and take care of them, and receive observation and treatment together,” Wu Qianyu, a Shanghai health official, said. Those families will be sent to centralized isolation facilities, she added.</p> <p>On Tuesday, a state media outlet published photos of a makeshift hospital set up in the Shanghai New International Expo Center, with one ward specifically dedicated to treating children and their family members who had tested positive.</p>

Still, officials did not relent on the practice of separating children from uninfected parents. Ms. Wu, the health official, told reporters that national treatment guidelines dictated that infected patients be separated from those not infected. As a result, children under 7 whose parents did “not meet accompaniment requirements” would be treated at public health centers, she said. Older children would be sent to centralized isolation facilities.

On the social media platform Weibo, many users were not appeased. Under the hashtag “Shanghai health commission replies to how infected children be treated,” which was viewed more than 80 million times, commenters urged policymakers to be more compassionate and noted that medical staff members were not necessarily trained as caretakers.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Trucking firms train drivers but drawbacks
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/business/economy/trucker-training.html
GIST	<p>Wayne Orr didn't yet know that his foot was broken as he made his way back from Texas to his home in South Carolina, but he did know that he couldn't continue pressing the pedals on the tractor-trailer he had been driving.</p> <p>A new driver only a few months past his training period, he had to sit out for six weeks without pay. Then, when his foot finally healed, he discovered that his company, CRST Expedited, had fired him. Frustrated and needing a paycheck, he found a new job driving for Schneider International, but was once again stymied: CRST threatened to sue Schneider for hiring him, he said.</p> <p>“I called CRST and they told me that they would not take me back and that I had to pay them \$6,500 or I could never drive for another company, either,” Mr. Orr, 59, said.</p> <p>He had signed a contract to work for CRST for 10 months in exchange for a two-week training course. If he didn't last 10 months, the contract required him to pay the company \$6,500 for that training.</p> <p>Each year, thousands of aspiring truck drivers sign up for training with some of the nation's biggest freight haulers. But the training programs often fail to deliver the compensation and working conditions they promise. And drivers who quit early can be pursued by debt collectors and blacklisted by other companies in the industry, making it difficult for them to find a new job.</p> <p>At least 18 companies, employing tens of thousands of drivers, run programs aimed at qualifying trainees for a commercial driver's license, or C.D.L. Typically, to get free training, the new hires must drive for the company for six months to about two years, usually starting at a reduced wage.</p> <p>The companies “sign them into this indentured servitude contract where they basically have to drive and be a profit source for the company,” said Michael Young, a lawyer in Utah representing a former trainee in a lawsuit against C.R. England, a privately held trucking company that employs about 4,800 drivers.</p> <p>With e-commerce leading Americans to expect quick delivery, trucking companies face pressure to haul more and do it faster. The American Trucking Associations, a trade association, has warned of a vast truck driver shortage. But researchers and drivers' representatives maintain that the high turnover occurs because too many large companies fail to make their jobs attractive enough. The industry has been plagued with class-action lawsuits about working conditions and wages, leading to hundreds of millions of dollars in settlements.</p> <p>Nine in 10 drivers leave their jobs within a year at large carriers like CRST and C.R. England, according to the trucking trade group. The companies need a constant flow of new recruits to keep revenue up, and without locking them into a contract, they risk losing their newly trained drivers to competitors offering a higher wage.</p>

“We think paying for C.D.L. school is a great benefit we can offer but not one that we can afford to do if folks do not come work with our team or ultimately pay us back,” said TJ England, chief legal officer of C.R. England. “If people just want to go to a different company, that’s where we try to protect our investment.”

CRST, an Iowa-based company, would not answer specific questions for this article but said in an emailed statement that its training program “has brought thousands of drivers into the industry who may not otherwise have been able to obtain a commercial driver’s license.” As for Mr. Orr’s account, a spokeswoman would say only that it omitted key facts.

The New York Times and The Hechinger Report, a nonprofit news organization, interviewed more than 30 current and former truckers with direct knowledge of company training programs, including 15 who had gone through them. Almost all 15 left before their contracts were up, despite intending to stick it out. One was given only four days at home in the four months he drove for CRST, just a quarter of what he said was promised in his contract, according to a complaint filed with the Iowa attorney general’s office.

Others described weeks of unpaid time spent waiting for trainers. Many said they were never told that they would sit for hours, unpaid, while they waited for their trucks to be loaded and unloaded, or even for days to get a new assignment. Many drivers said they were told by the companies that they would make more than they did. Since drivers are paid by the mile, the time spent waiting cut significantly into their paychecks.

In job advertisements and in their pitches to recruits, companies promise earnings of up to \$70,000 in the first year and even higher salaries in the future. But the median annual wage for all truck drivers, regardless of experience, was \$47,000 in May 2020, according to the most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Only the top 10 percent of earners were making above \$69,500.

Still, many are attracted to trucking despite its sometimes punishing demands, seeing it as a possible on-ramp to the middle class. New drivers can train at independent schools, which can be expensive, or community colleges, which may take more time. Company training programs are a popular option for those eager for a paycheck right away.

Many large companies start classes weekly; keeping a constant flow of people is crucial. They deputize their drivers, offering referral bonuses for every new person brought on board, and employ recruiters to pursue anyone who has expressed interest. In a training manual filed as an exhibit to a lawsuit in 2021, CRST instructed recruiters: “Create urgency. Tell the applicant we have a ‘few’ spots open. Our school and orientation will fill up quickly.”

At most company schools, trainees typically spend two to four weeks learning in a classroom and in parking lots. Many former trainees said that the instruction was insufficient and that they spent little time in trucks.

Amy Jeschke attended C.R. England’s program in Indiana in 2019. She went out on the road only twice during her training, she said, and the rest of the time did maneuvers in a yard or memorized what to do on a pre-trip inspection.

“Honestly, we weren’t doing anything for most of the time,” Ms. Jeschke, 46, said. “You’re lucky if you got in the truck once a day.”

Joy Skamser, 44, who also attended C.R. England’s training program in 2019 and lives in southern Illinois, said she felt unprepared to drive, despite earning her commercial driver’s license at the end of the training.

“They do not teach you how to drive a truck, they just teach you how to pass the test, and that’s very dangerous,” she said.

Mr. England said the company gave high-quality training to its students that includes time in the classroom, on the driving range and on the road, with skill assessments throughout. Students who fail the assessments are given additional practice, he said.

Once they have earned the license, drivers haul actual loads for their new employers. For typically four to 12 weeks, they are accompanied by a trainer. They earn a set weekly rate, varying by company but often \$500 to \$800, according to company websites. Mr. England said his company's pay was \$560 a week in 2019 and about \$784 today.

Trainers may be barely trained themselves, often needing only six months' experience, and they are allowed to sleep in the back while the new driver is alone in the cab, according to industry experts and many companies.

Ms. Jeschke said she finished her training without being able to back up, a crucial skill for truckers. She said she once spent a week at a truck stop, unpaid, waiting for another driver because she didn't yet have the expertise to pick up a load on her own.

Frustrated with the working conditions and the low pay, she and Ms. Skamser left C.R. England before their contracts were up and went to work for another trucking company, Werner Enterprises, where they say they were more fully trained.

"I do not have words for how bad it was," Ms. Jeschke said. "They do not care about drivers, only the loads."

Ms. Skamser said a debt collection agency was pursuing her for \$6,000 that C.R. England says she owes for her training.

It's reasonable for companies to want to recoup the cost of training an individual, said Stewart J. Schwab, a professor at Cornell Law School. Still, he noted, like noncompete clauses, these contracts can significantly restrict worker mobility and hinder competition. In 2021, Mr. Schwab worked on a proposed law about restrictive employment agreements, such as the ones trucking companies use, with the Uniform Law Commission, a nonpartisan organization that drafts laws for states.

The proposed legislation calls for the repayment of the training cost to be prorated based on when an employee leaves and says it should not exceed the actual cost of the training.

Many major trucking companies don't prorate their charges, meaning a driver who leaves on Day 1 after training would owe the same amount as one let go the day before fulfilling the contract. And companies are generally not made to account for how much they spend on the actual training. In 2019, a judge found that CRST's charging \$6,500 for its training "when in fact the cost was thousands of dollars lower" was a "deceptive practice."

That finding came as part of a class-action lawsuit that Mr. Orr eventually joined. The suit, which contended that drivers were being overcharged for their training and paid less than minimum wage for their hours worked, was settled for \$12.5 million in 2021.

Companies can come after drivers for money — or send them to debt collection — regardless of the reasons they leave or are let go. They also can try to prevent drivers from taking other jobs, as CRST did with Mr. Orr, lawyers for the drivers say. Such actions effectively deny those who want to leave a company the opportunity to do so and pay off their debt.

A lawsuit filed in 2017 on behalf of drivers contends that eight companies, including CRST and C.R. England, are conspiring to block drivers under contract from changing jobs. Some companies refuse to release drivers' records to prospective employers or send letters threatening litigation to competitors who don't abide by a no-poaching agreement, the complaint says.

	<p>Mr. England described the allegations as meritless but acknowledged in an interview that his company had “sued or threatened to sue some of our competitors for unlawfully interfering with those contractual relationships.”</p> <p>He said his company’s competitors had “unfairly taken advantage” of the training C.R. England provides to its drivers.</p> <p>Worried about being blackballed wherever he went, Mr. Orr took out a loan — the lowest interest rate he could find was 14 percent — and paid CRST. Through the class-action lawsuit, he was reimbursed for about two-thirds of what he had paid.</p> <p>“That training program is like a money mill to them,” he said. “They pretty much sell you a lot of dreams.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Peru lifts decree; protests, clashes continue
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/world/americas/peru-protests-emergency-curfew.html
GIST	<p>LIMA, Peru — Demonstrations continued on Tuesday night in Peru after President Pedro Castillo lifted an unprecedented emergency decree that had suspended civil liberties in the capital, Lima, as his increasingly isolated government struggled to quell a series of violent protests over rising fuel, fertilizer and food costs that swept the country in recent days.</p> <p>The president had announced the curfew just before midnight on Monday, in a televised message that caught residents in the capital of almost 10 million people by surprise and triggered criticism from many sectors of Peruvian society. In issuing the restrictions, he had cited the recent unrest and required that residents of Lima and the neighboring port city of Callao stay inside their homes for roughly 24 hours.</p> <p>He had to backtrack on Tuesday as protesters wearing the red and white jerseys of the national soccer team and waving Peruvian flags defied the order to demand his resignation in downtown Lima, while Mr. Castillo held talks with lawmakers. Demonstrators celebrated outside of Congress after widespread discontent led Mr. Castillo to reconsider.</p> <p>“Peru isn’t going through a good moment,” Mr. Castillo said after announcing he would lift the curfew. He added that his government had to act to solve problems, saying: “We’re going to the presidential office to sign and annul this immovability measure.”</p> <p>But clashes between protesters and police continued as dusk fell, with officers firing tear gas and people pelting them with rocks. The number of protesters decreased as night fell, but local television reported that some set fires and vandalized the offices of the judiciary, the public prosecutor’s office and the electoral board.</p> <p>The order had gone into effect just two hours after Mr. Castillo’s televised announcement, shocking a country where many have lost trust in the government after back-to-back corruption scandals, political feuds and unrest in recent years — which have forced out three sitting presidents and landed former leaders and politicians in prison.</p> <p>The measure had been immediately denounced by human rights lawyers, activists and critics as disproportionate and authoritarian, and analysts said it revealed growing paranoia in Mr. Castillo’s administration, as he has governed erratically and shed support from across the political spectrum in his first eight months in office.</p> <p>Eduardo Dargent, a political scientist in Lima, called it “a defensive measure from a weak government, a clumsy government that’s growing weaker by the day.”</p>

The office of the ombudsman, a state agency that advocates for human rights, and representatives of different political parties as well as human rights groups and business associations had all called for Mr. Castillo to repeal the measure. On Tuesday afternoon, at least hundreds of demonstrators defied the lockdown order, gathering downtown to protest and to call for Mr. Castillo's resignation.

The demonstrations against rising fuel and fertilizer prices, caused initially by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, entered their second week on Monday, and had expanded into full-fledged anti-government protests in several regions, with at least four deaths tied to the unrest.

While most of the violence in recent days had taken place outside the capital, a minister in Mr. Castillo's cabinet said on Tuesday that the decision to impose a curfew across Lima had been based on information from a far-right lawmaker, Jorge Montoya, a former marine officer who just a week ago supported a second failed attempt to impeach the president.

Mr. Montoya told journalists on Tuesday that he was privy to intelligence that indicated that people planned to "come down from the hills" to loot Lima, echoing a conspiracy theory in the capital that plays on racist tropes about Peruvians from the Andes.

Residents of the capital banged on pots and pans to protest the measure at midday on Tuesday. The streets of the capital were mostly empty during the day, according to images aired on local news stations, as public transportation was shut down, schools were closed and the police had set up checkpoints to restrict transit.

Juan Lopez, 27, a doorman in Lima, didn't find out about the curfew until Tuesday morning. "Everything was desolate," he said.

"He promised so much but he hasn't done anything," Mr. Lopez said, referring to Mr. Castillo. The state of emergency seemed to be a "provocation," he added. "People are going to rise up."

Mr. Castillo, a farmer and former union activist who for more than two months led a teachers' strike that shuttered schools in 2017, announced the decree on the eve of the 30th anniversary of Alberto Fujimori's "self coup," when the former strongman ordered the military to take control of Congress and the courts, marking the start of his authoritarian rule.

Like Mr. Fujimori, Mr. Castillo was elected democratically on a populist platform, propelled by an upswell of anti-establishment sentiment following years of economic and political crises. He narrowly beat Mr. Fujimori's daughter, who had come to embody the political elite, in last year's election.

In his first eight months in office, Mr. Castillo has burned through political capital and sunk his approval rating as he has zigzagged from left to right, stumbling from scandal to scandal and making a series of controversial appointments, while failing to propose any meaningful reforms.

He has so far survived two impeachment attempts and faces growing accusations of corruption that analysts say will almost certainly lead him to be formally investigated for criminal activity once his term and presidential immunity end.

"As this sort of incompetency and ineffectualness continues on, the authoritarian temptation grows, and that's where I think this is coming from," said Jo-Marie Burt, a professor of Latin American studies at George Mason University. Professor Burt lived in Lima during the country's bloody internal conflict in the 1980s, when nighttime curfews were routine as the government cracked down on leftist insurgencies.

Even during the worst periods of violence, Peru did not enforce a 24-hour curfew, she said.

After ignoring the protests for several days, Mr. Castillo accused their leaders of being paid to stir up unrest, infuriating demonstrators. His prime minister told people to eat fish if they could no longer

	afford chicken, even though fish is more expensive, and his defense minister appeared to minimize the four deaths linked to the protests.
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HEADLINE	04/06 Germany scrambles to quit Russia gas use
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/06/world/europe/germany-gas-russia-ukraine.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=World%20News
GIST	<p>LUBMIN, Germany — Past a nudist beach and a sleepy marina, a gigantic mesh of metallic pipes rises from the pine forest behind the tiny village of Lubmin on Germany’s Baltic coast.</p> <p>If few people have heard of Lubmin, from Berlin to Washington almost everyone seems to know the name of the two gas pipelines arriving here directly from Russia: Nord Stream 1, which carries almost 60 million cubic meters of natural gas per year to keep Europe’s biggest economy humming. And Nord Stream 2, built to increase that flow but abruptly shuttered in the run-up to Russia’s attack on Ukraine.</p> <p>The pair of pipelines has become a twin symbol of Germany’s dangerous dependence on Russian gas — and the country’s belated and frenzied effort to wean itself off it — with calls growing for the European Union to hit Moscow with tougher sanctions as atrocities come to light in Ukraine.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the European Commission, the E.U.’s executive branch, proposed banning imports of Russian coal and soon, possibly, its oil. But Russian gas — far more critical to Germany and much of the rest of Europe — was off the table. At least for now.</p> <p>“We are dependent on them,” said Axel Vogt, the mayor of Lubmin, which has a population of just 2,119, as he stood in the industrial harbor between the two pipelines one recent morning. “None of us imagined Russia ever going to war. Now Russia is one of our main suppliers of gas and that’s not something we can change overnight.”</p> <p>That dependence on Russia — accounting for more than a quarter of Germany’s total energy use — has meant that Berlin has so far refused to cut off President Vladimir V. Putin, whose war it is effectively subsidizing to the tune of an estimated 200 million euros, or about \$220 million, in energy payments every day.</p> <p>The images of mass graves and murdered civilians in the Ukrainian town of Bucha have horrified Europe and spurred demands for a Russian energy embargo, especially among Germany’s eastern neighbors.</p> <p>“Buying Russian oil and gas is financing war crimes,” said Gabrielius Landsbergis, the foreign minister of Lithuania, which has stopped all Russian gas imports. “Dear E.U. friends, pull the plug. Don’t be an accomplice.”</p> <p>Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany reacted swiftly to the images from Bucha, condemning the “war crimes committed by the Russian military,” expelling 40 Russian diplomats and promising new and tougher sanctions on Moscow. Germany’s network regulator went so far as to take over the German subsidiary of Gazprom, Russia’s main gas company and owner of Nord Stream.</p> <p>But government ministers have, for now, ruled out a ban on Russian gas imports. The reasons are clear.</p> <p>One in two German homes is heated with gas, and gas also powers much of Germany’s vaunted export industry. For years, Berlin happily relied on Moscow for more than half of its gas imports, a third of its oil and half of its hard coal imports, ignoring warnings from the United States and other allies about Russia weaponizing its energy supplies.</p> <p>Quitting that habit will not be easy in the short term without a shock to a German economy that like others in Europe is still recovering from the pandemic.</p>

“Our strategy is to become independent of Russian gas, coal and oil — but not immediately,” said Robert Habeck, Germany’s economy minister and vice chancellor, who has been busy traveling to Qatar and Washington in search of alternative gas contracts.

The government is taking steps to make Germany independent of Russian coal by the summer, and of Russian oil by the end of the year. Already, the share of oil imports from Russia has fallen to 20 percent and Russian coal imports have been halved.

But gas — on which Germany is banking as a bridge toward its goal of a carbon neutral economy by 2045 — is an entirely different matter. Mr. Habeck and others said that becoming independent of the Russian supply would take at least two years.

“We can’t substitute gas in the short term,” Christian Lindner, the finance minister said. “We would harm ourselves more than them.”

It has not helped that Germany committed itself to phasing out nuclear power under former Chancellor Angela Merkel, leaving the country more reliant on Russia than before. The legacy of that decision can be seen in Lubmin, too.

Behind the gleaming pipelines are the outlines of a shuttered nuclear power plant, once the biggest in the Communist East Germany. The same year that Ms. Merkel celebrated the opening of Nord Stream 2, she announced that Germany would be quitting nuclear power. The last three nuclear plants are scheduled to come off the grid this year.

“That was a huge mistake, which in light of what’s happening now is more evident than ever,” said Mr. Vogt, the mayor.

Even before Russia’s attack on Ukraine, plans by Mr. Scholz’ new coalition to simultaneously phase out nuclear power and coal while turning Germany into a carbon-neutral economy looked ambitious.

Now even politicians with the Greens, like Mr. Habeck, are exploring what it would take to keep the last nuclear plants running longer. Some worry that the 2030 deadline for closing the last coal plants might also have to be pushed back.

But the pressure for a swift exit from Russian fossil fuels is growing even within Germany, with some arguing that rooted in its own history of genocide, Germany had a moral obligation that trumped economic considerations.

“The country that proudly proclaims that Europe will ‘never again’ see the likes of Auschwitz is pumping 200 million euros each day into Putin’s war chest,” the financial newspaper Handelsblatt wrote in an editorial. “All of a sudden the discussion in Germany about whether our economy would grow by 6 percent or just 3 percent in the event of an energy embargo seems petty and insignificant. We resemble a hostage to the Kremlin.”

Russia’s war on Ukraine was a wake-up call for Germany, which for decades had bet that trade and economic interdependence with Moscow would keep the peace in Europe.

But, within days of the invasion, Mr. Scholz vowed to break with the energy policy of Ms. Merkel and her predecessor Gerhard Schröder, who still sits on the board of the Russian oil company Rosneft and chairs the shareholders committee of Nord Stream 2.

Mr. Vogt, the mayor of Lubmin, remembers hosting Ms. Merkel and Mr. Schröder in 2011. They had come to open the gas spigot with Dmitri Medvedev, then Russia’s President. “This gas pipeline will make Europe’s energy supply significantly safer,” Mr. Schröder said at the time.

In February, after Mr. Scholz suspended Nord Stream 2, Mr. Medvedev, now deputy chair of the Russian security council, said on Twitter: “Welcome to a new world, in which Europeans will soon pay 2,000 euros for 1,000 cubic meters gas.”

On her morning walk along the beach and past the pipelines in Lubmin one recent morning, Petra Krüger, a 57-year-old radiologist assistant and mother of two, said she was worried about rising energy costs and was only heating in the afternoons now. She recalled the excitement in the village when the original Nord Stream pipeline was built after years of industrial decline.

“It felt like the community had gained this long-term lifeline,” she recalled.

“We were all fooled,” she added. “We should have never allowed ourselves to become this dependent. It’s scary.”

Rising energy costs not only in Germany but also across Europe have raised questions of who will be hurt more by a Russian energy embargo — Mr. Putin or the West.

Some argue that Germany should cut the gas ties first.

“We should act before Putin does,” said Roderich Kiesewetter, a conservative lawmaker and member on the foreign affairs committee of the German Parliament.

The prospect of Mr. Putin himself closing the gas tap is a scenario that the German government is actively preparing for. Last week, Mr. Habeck activated the first step of a national gas emergency plan that could eventually lead to the rationing of natural gas.

Every day, a crisis team of government representatives, regulators and private industry meets to monitor gas supplies. If they start running low, the government will intervene to begin rationing natural gas supplies. Households and critical public services, including hospitals and emergency services, would be prioritized over industry, according to a planning document.

Not only Nord Stream is controlled by Russia. So is Germany’s — and Western Europe’s — biggest gas storage facility, which was taken over by Gazprom in 2015 along with others. Some of these facilities have been running conspicuously low, say German officials, who spy a strategic move by Moscow.

“We must increase precautionary measures to be prepared for an escalation on the part of Russia,” said Mr. Habeck, the economy minister, urging German consumers and companies to begin making efforts to cut their energy use wherever possible.

“Every kilowatt-hour counts,” he said.

But already there is the concern that Germany will trade one dependency for another.

Long term, the strategy is to accelerate Germany’s move into renewable energies — or “freedom energies,” as the finance minister called them. The government is offering new subsidies for the wind and solar sector. Until 2005, Germany was a leader in solar production. Today, 95 percent of solar cells and 85 percent of solar modules are made in China.

“If Russia and China ganged up on us right now, they could flatten us,” said Gunter Erfurt, chief executive of Meyer Burger, the only European company currently making solar modules with its own solar cells.

“We need to bring solar manufacturing back to Europe. Europe needs to diversify and fast.”

“We have a lot of sun and wind up here,” Mr. Vogt said. “Maybe that’s the next chapter.”

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/06/world/putin-russia-assets-wealth-sanctions.html
GIST	<p>Buried in a 421-page legal filing in an obscure court case is a single sentence, offered almost as an afterthought, about a meeting at a Geneva restaurant where two businessmen chatted about “a yacht which had been presented to Mr. Putin.”</p> <p>The passing reference, cited in a 2010 judge’s decision in London on a financial dispute involving a shipping company, is the rare bit of public evidence directly linking President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to any of the luxury boats, planes or villas associated with him over the years. It has taken on new significance as U.S. and European authorities pursue the hidden wealth of Mr. Putin and people close to him in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>But the British court document also holds a clue to why it has been so hard to clearly connect the Russian president to his rumored riches. The yacht, called the Olympia, was managed by a company in Cyprus, where corporation filings show that the true owner was not Mr. Putin — it was the Russian government.</p> <p>Indeed, it is one of many extravagant assets long speculated to be Mr. Putin’s that actually are owned or controlled by the state, showing how much the private interests of the president and his inner circle have merged with those of the government he has dominated for two decades. Others include a sprawling resort, a fleet of expensive automobiles, fancy planes and still more yachts.</p> <p>The United States and its allies have created a multinational task force to track and seize assets of at least 50 wealthy Russians, including Mr. Putin, and announced rewards for information that helps in the effort. But some analysts question whether it will have much impact on the Russian president, who has never been found to personally own much worth confiscating.</p> <p>While there has been much media and public discussion that oligarchs and old Putin friends could be secretly holding valuable property on his behalf, or keeping his cash for him in offshore companies and Swiss bank accounts, many of his more obvious luxuries are embedded in state-owned enterprises and largely beyond the reach of Western sanctions.</p> <p>Alina Polyakova, an expert on Russian foreign affairs who leads the Center for European Policy Analysis, said that because government resources and agencies were most likely used to shield at least some of his purported wealth, targeting Mr. Putin personally with sanctions was mainly symbolic.</p> <p>“To get to him, as well, we’d have to sanction the entire Russian government,” she said. “And, of course, there are reasons why Europe and the United States are not prepared to do so.”</p> <p>Economically blocking the whole of the Russian state would mean, for instance, fully blacklisting Gazprom, one of the world’s largest energy companies and a major source of natural gas in Europe. So far, the company has faced only limited sanctions aimed mainly at restricting its purchases of certain debt and equity, even as worldwide outrage grows over apparent Russian atrocities in Ukraine.</p> <p>Yet, Gazprom figures in any calculus of Mr. Putin’s possible wealth. Though luxury real estate would seem to have little to do with its core mission, the state-run gas company built a plush hideaway that the Russian president enjoys in the mountainous Altai region of Siberia. Despite claims that the project was not connected to the Kremlin, a report co-written by a former deputy prime minister and Putin critic, Boris Nemtsov, noted that the location was “being provided with security by the FSO” — the federal protective service assigned to the Russian president and other high-level officials.</p> <p>The mountain resort was among 20 properties described in the 2012 report by Mr. Nemtsov as being available to Mr. Putin, along with dozens of luxury aircraft, four yachts, and 11 wristwatches with a retail value of nearly \$700,000, all allegedly paid for with public funds.</p> <p>Mr. Nemtsov was assassinated in 2015, shot in the back while crossing a bridge in view of the Kremlin.</p>

Because of the efforts by the few independent news organizations operating in Russia before the recent crackdown on free speech, as well as opposition voices like Mr. Nemtsov and Aleksei A. Navalny, the notion that Mr. Putin is living large on the taxpayers' dime is hardly a secret. The Kremlin has long denied that he lives beyond his means — officially, he collects a salary of about \$140,000 and has a small apartment in Moscow. But his spokesman told a Russian newspaper, in response to Mr. Nemtsov's allegations, that the Russian president also uses state-owned residences and vehicles "in accordance with the law."

The presence of Mr. Putin's protective detail has been seen as a telltale sign of his hidden ties to various extravagances. Sergei Kolesnikov, a former business partner of a Putin ally, wrote an open letter in 2010 asserting that government funds had been diverted to help develop a \$1 billion estate on the Black Sea that became known as "Putin's palace."

An investigation released last year by Mr. Navalny, the jailed opposition leader, found that the palace had been guarded by members of the federal protective service, and that Russia's internal security agency, the FSB, had at one point enforced a no-fly zone over it.

Most recently, Mr. Navalny's team reported that it had linked crew members on a \$700 million superyacht to the same Kremlin protective detail, amid speculation that the vessel, whose ownership is obscured by offshore shell companies, was secretly used by Mr. Putin. The 459-foot yacht, named the Scheherazade, has two helicopter pads and is topped with a cluster of satellite domes. It is currently dry-docked in Italy.

"If the owner of the yacht cannot be identified — it's some offshore company from the Marshall Islands — then we will try to establish who works on it and who pays them salaries," Maria Pevchikh, a member of Mr. Navalny's team, said in a video describing the investigation.

The New York Times, which first reported that U.S. officials had indications the yacht could be tied to Mr. Putin, has not been able to independently confirm the Navalny team's findings about the crew's security connections, and American officials declined to specify what information they had that could pierce the veil of corporate secrecy surrounding the vessel's offshore ownership.

Indeed, many jurisdictions traditionally have offered not only tax advantages to managing assets through offshore shells, but also corporation registries that make it difficult, if not impossible, to publicly identify the ultimate owners. It is primarily through leaks from law firms specializing in these services that wealthy Russians have been discovered to be frequent clients.

And sometimes the Russian government itself is the beneficiary.

Leaked files known as the Paradise Papers, from the Appleby law firm in Bermuda, revealed offshore projects on behalf of several enterprises controlled by the Russian state, including VTB Capital, an investment bank, and Gazprom. Another involved the \$53.9 million purchase of a Bombardier Global 6000 private jet by an obscure Cyprus company, Genetechma Finance Ltd.

Appleby's records show that Genetechma was operating, ultimately, on behalf of VEB, a state-owned economic development bank with ties to Russian intelligence. VEB, whose chairman has reportedly used private jets, controlled the Cyprus-based Genetechma through a Luxembourg subsidiary.

A different Cyprus company surfaced in the ownership chain of the Olympia yacht, whose connection to Mr. Putin appeared in the British court documents. The litigation involved convoluted allegations of self-dealing among executives at several Russian shipping companies, including Sovcomflot, whose majority owner is the Russian government.

In a decision by a London court in 2010, Justice Andrew Smith described how various players involved attributed their positions of influence to having "a good relationship" with Mr. Putin, and in one instance, recalled a meeting at the Lipp Brasserie in Geneva where the gift of the Olympia to him was mentioned.

	<p>The yacht, estimated to cost \$35 million to \$50 million in 2002 and reportedly outfitted with marble baths, extensive gilding and a Jacuzzi, was said to be “managed by Unicom,” a Cyprus-based company.</p> <p>Corporation records in Cyprus, which in recent years has become more rigorous about requiring transparency of ownership, show that Unicom was owned by a Bermuda company, whose “ultimate parent corporation” was a state-owned shipping company in Russia.</p> <p>The Olympia, which sails under a Cayman Islands registration, was last known to be in the Baltic Sea near St. Petersburg.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Zelensky: Russia atrocities, UN inaction
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/world/europe/zelensky-un-security-council.html
GIST	<p>With evidence mounting of atrocities in the Kyiv suburbs, and Russian forces preparing for a new offensive farther east, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine delivered a scathing speech to the United Nations on Tuesday, accusing Russia of a litany of horrors and questioning whether a world body that takes no action to stop a war serves any purpose.</p> <p>Speaking via video link to the U.N. Security Council, he compared Russian forces to the Islamic State, called for a Nuremberg-like war crimes tribunal and vented his bitter frustration, knowing that the council — where Russia is one of five permanent members with veto power — would do nothing but talk.</p> <p>“Where is the security that the Security Council needs to guarantee?” Mr. Zelensky said, raising the question of whether Russia deserved to keep its seat on the council. “Are you ready to close the U.N.? Do you think that the time of international law is gone? If your answer is no, then you need to act immediately.”</p> <p>The chamber fell silent as a short video provided by Mr. Zelensky’s government played, showing some of the hundreds of corpses found strewn around the city of Bucha, northwest of Kyiv, after Russian forces retreated last week — bloated, charred bodies of civilians, including children. Some victims, their hands bound, had been shot in the head.</p> <p>Mr. Zelensky said that in Bucha, “they killed entire families, adults and children, and they tried to burn the bodies.” Civilians “were crushed by tanks while sitting in their cars in the middle of the road,” he added, asserting that “women were raped and killed in front of their children; their tongues were pulled out.”</p> <p>China refrained from criticizing Russia in Tuesday’s session, saying that the Security Council should wait until investigations establish the facts in Ukraine. A rising global power, China has drawn closer to Russia in recent years, united by a shared antipathy to the United States. The divisions on the war appeared essentially unchanged since Feb. 26, when 11 of 15 Security Council members voted for a resolution condemning Russia’s invasion, Russia vetoed the measure, and three others abstained — China, India and the United Arab Emirates.</p> <p>Russia’s U.N. ambassador, Vasily Nebenzya, reiterated his government’s claims — rebutted by ample evidence — that atrocities in Bucha had been faked, or had not occurred when Russians held the city. He made a number of other unsupported claims, including stating falsely that in Ukraine — where the freely elected president is a Jew who lost family members in the Holocaust — Nazis are “running the show.”</p> <p>After President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia launched the war on Ukraine on Feb. 24, his military became bogged down on several fronts in the face of logistical failures and unexpectedly fierce Ukrainian resistance. Russian forces spent weeks shelling and occupying cities and towns in northern Ukraine, where they took heavy losses as they failed to capture Kyiv, the capital. Last week they pulled back from that part of the country, preparing for what Russian officials and foreign analysts said would be a shift in focus toward eastern Ukraine.</p>

“The next pivotal battle of the war” is likely to be for the eastern city of Sloviansk, according to a report released on Tuesday by the Institute for the Study of War, based in Washington.

Revulsion over the apparent executions discovered in Bucha deepened Russia’s economic isolation, despite its denials of responsibility.

The United States has started blocking Russia from making debt payments using dollars held in American banks, a move designed to deplete its international currency reserves and potentially push Russia toward its first foreign currency debt default in a century.

And as early as Wednesday, the Biden administration is expected to announce additional sanctions against Russia for the killings of Ukrainian citizens, according to a person familiar with the plans who was not authorized to detail them publicly. The administration will expand existing sanctions against Sberbank, the largest financial institution in Russia, and implement sanctions against Alfa Bank, one of the country’s largest private lenders. The administration also plans to announce sanctions against adult children of Vladimir V. Putin, the Russian president.

The Biden administration has also authorized an additional shipment of up to \$100 million in military supplies that will be taken from existing Defense Department stockpiles, the Pentagon announced in an email sent to reporters Tuesday night. This comes days after an additional \$300 million in defense aid was announced April 1.

And the European Union took a significant step toward overcoming resistance to curbing fuel imports from Russia, on which its member nations rely heavily. The European Commission, the executive body of the European Union, proposed cutting off imports of Russian coal — oil and natural gas remain hotly debated — and barring Russian vessels from E.U. ports as part of a new round of sanctions.

The measures, which require unanimous approval, are expected to go to a vote of E.U. ambassadors on Wednesday. Diplomats said the sanctions package would target, among others, two daughters of Mr. Putin. The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, and the chief E.U. diplomat, Josep Borrell Fontelles, announced plans to visit Kyiv this week and meet with Mr. Zelensky.

The Ukrainian prosecutor general’s office said that it, along with the Kyiv police, had discovered what it called a Bucha “torture chamber,” where Russian forces had left behind the bodies of five men, their hands tied, who had been tortured and killed.

Mr. Zelensky reinforced a point that U.N. officials have made repeatedly: The true extent of Ukraine’s destruction and casualties is unknown but far greater than what has been documented, because outside observers have been unable to reach some of the most devastated areas. “Now the world can see what Russia did in Bucha, but the world has yet to see what it has done in other parts of our country,” Mr. Zelensky said.

New York Times journalists on Tuesday were able for the first time to reach the town of Borodyanka, northwest of Kyiv, battered by Russian rockets and airstrikes, where the mayor estimated 200 dead lay beneath the rubble. In the besieged port of Mariupol, local officials have put the death toll in the thousands.

Fierce fighting continues along Ukraine’s southern coast, where Mariupol, largely reduced to ruins by Russian bombardment, is “the center of hell,” said Martin Griffiths, the U.N. chief of humanitarian relief.

More than 250 miles west of Mariupol, explosions shuddered through the port of Mykolaiv, a day after the mayor said Russian strikes had killed 10 people and wounded 46. He said that Russians had hit residential buildings, schools, a hospital and an orphanage in his city since the war began, and had used cluster munitions. Soldiers defending the city said that increasingly, Russian forces were hitting civilian targets.

After four consecutive days of trying and failing to send an aid convoy into Mariupol, where people are desperately short of food, water, power, heat and medicines, the International Committee of the Red Cross decided against another attempt on Tuesday.

Ukrainian officials say the Russians have prevented crucial supplies from reaching the city. Mr. Nebenzya, the Russian U.N. ambassador, said the Ukrainians had blocked the convoy, and he claimed that Russian forces had evacuated 123,500 people from Mariupol.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said that in fact, tens of thousands of Ukrainians, including from Mariupol, had been taken to “filtration camps” in Russia, where family members were separated and people were stripped of passports and cellphones. “I do not need to spell out what these so-called filtration camps are reminiscent of,” she said. “It’s chilling, and we cannot look away.”

Rosemary A. DiCarlo, a U.N. under secretary general, said there was credible evidence that Russia had used cluster munitions — shells that burst open to spew many smaller bomblets over a wide area — at least 24 times in populated areas of Ukraine. Most countries have signed a treaty banning cluster munitions as indiscriminate weapons with a high risk of civilian casualties, but Russia, like the United States, has not.

More than 11 million Ukrainians — about one in four — have fled their homes because of the war, including more than 4 million who have left the country, according to the United Nations, creating Europe’s largest and fastest-growing refugee crisis since World War II.

Russian forces recently captured the eastern city of Izyum, and Western analysts say they are preparing for a drive to the south and southeast, to bolster efforts to seize more of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, where Russia-backed separatists have been fighting for eight years. Many of Ukraine’s best-equipped and most experienced military units have been concentrated in that area, known as Donbas.

“Russian forces continue to make little to no progress in frontal assaults” on the portions of Donbas still held by Ukraine, the Institute for the Study of War reported.

Whether the Russians aim simply to reinforce their units in Donbas, or are planning a more ambitious effort to encircle the Ukrainian forces, capturing Sloviansk is crucial, the institute said.

In the Luhansk region on Tuesday, an attack that Ukrainians blamed on Russian forces hit a storage tank containing nitric acid, releasing a toxic cloud and prompting the regional administrator to urge people to stay inside and close their windows.

The Russian units that withdrew from the region around Kyiv, having suffered heavy casualties, extensive equipment losses and poor morale, the institute said, “are highly unlikely to be effectively deployed elsewhere in Ukraine and are likely a spent force.”

An intelligence assessment released by the British defense ministry was less definitive, but said that any Russian forces redeploying from the north would first need considerable time to repair and replace equipment, and to make up for casualties.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Hundreds feared dead; attack on building
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/world/asia/ukraine-civilians-russia-borodyanka.html
GIST	BORODYANKA, Ukraine — Andreiy Ziuzko stood near the flattened apartment complex in Borodyanka that was once his home, his belongings in plastic bags on the sidewalk beside a few blackened cooking pots on Tuesday.

The building had lain in ruins for weeks, struck just after fighting had driven him and his family to flee. It was only after a while that he explained something even worse had happened. His mother lived a few doors down, and her apartment had also been bombed.

“Mom’s home was hit on the same day,” Mr. Ziuzko said. “I can’t find her.”

Russian troops recently withdrew from the area around Borodyanka, a Ukrainian commuter town near Kyiv, the capital, that was among the first places to be hit by Russian airstrikes after the invasion. Now, dozens of people who were sheltering in basements or apartments are missing and presumed dead under the rubble, the acting mayor said Tuesday.

“We think over 200 people died,” said Georgii Yerko, the acting mayor of Borodyanka. “But it is an assumption.”

On Tuesday, New York Times journalists reached the town for the first time after Russian troops withdrew. The scars left behind were shocking, with great gashes sliced through multistory complexes along the main street. Four apartment buildings had collapsed in the bombing, residents said, their floors crushed down to ground level like concertinas. Heavy fighting left more destruction for two miles along the main street.

Russia’s pullout from areas around Kyiv in recent days has unveiled evidence of abuses that have galvanized the world’s attention. In places like Bucha, a closer-in suburb of the capital just a few miles from Borodyanka, the focus has been on evidence that Ukrainian civilians were killed by Russian forces, including bodies whose hands had been bound and who had been shot at close range.

In Borodyanka, and other places, the focus has been on evidence that civilian buildings were indiscriminately targeted. The topic was central in discussions at the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday.

Rosemary DiCarlo, the U.N. chief for political and peace-building affairs, told the Security Council that explosive weapons had caused death and destruction in many populated areas, wrecking infrastructure that included residential buildings, hospitals, schools, water stations and electricity systems.

The U.N. received credible allegations that Russia had used cluster munitions — banned weapons that spew small explosive mines across a wide space — in populated areas at least 24 times, Ms. DiCarlo said. She added that there were accusations that Ukrainian forces had also used cluster munitions.

“Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited under international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes,” Ms. DiCarlo told the council.

Borodyanka used to have about 13,000 residents, and the town — a simple, modest place, as one resident described it — was built along a highway crossroads. That convergence was a selling point for people who worked in Kyiv, just a short drive away to the southeast, and for Russian troops as well as their convoys that began piling into the country’s north to try to seal off the capital in the last days of February.

Residents said that the Russian forces began filing through the town around Feb. 27, and that volunteers with the Ukrainian territorial defense forces then attacked one of the convoys. After that, Russian soldiers started shooting at cars and buildings as they drove through town, said Valerii Vishnyak, a resident. “It was just lawlessness,” he said.

Then, late on March 1, Russian jets came screaming overhead. “We were sitting in the cellar,” said Tamara Vishnyak, Mr. Vishnyak’s mother. “The plane flew very low. I counted three seconds and the bomb fell.” The bomb crashed through the building across the street.

Mr. Ziuzko, 43, said that the only reason he and his family escaped the airstrikes was because they had fled their nearby building when the fighting set it on fire.

He said he did not know where his mother, Svetlana Ziuzko, 66, had been at the time the bombs hit, whether in her apartment or in the bomb shelter. His voice catching, he said he could not remember what day it was the last time he saw her.

“The back of the building is gone; just the balcony is there,” he said, pointing to the sixth-floor balcony hanging above a vacuum.

Behind the building, two women stood watch while their husbands climbed down into the basement next to the destroyed section. Tanya Hachnikova, 36, said her husband was trying to find his parents, who lived in the apartment building. The second woman, Oksana Dikan, 43, was looking for a colleague who lived there and was also missing.

They said they thought up to 20 people had been living in the building when it was hit, but the two men climbed back out saying they could not get through to the basement that lay under the rubble. “We need help, and we need equipment,” Ms. Dikan said later by telephone.

Many people fled the town to escape the fighting that raged there for days, until a sustained Ukrainian counterattack led Russian troops to pull out last week. Mr. Yerko, the acting mayor, said that digging for bodies would have to wait. The first task, he said, was to reconnect the electricity and remove unexploded ordinance and then clear the rubble.

Yaroslav, an information technology specialist who asked that only his first name be published to avoid being identified, was climbing on to a bench to look into a gutted apartment he said belonged to his parents. They had left, with just their documents and their cat, the day before the bomb fell on the building, he said. Almost certainly there were people still living in their apartments and hiding in the shelter when the airstrike hit, he said.

Asked if the Ukrainian military had been using the building, he said no. “What army? My parents were living there.”

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HEADLINE	04/05 Russian soldiers opened fire on lone cyclist
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/world/europe/bucha-shooting-video.html
GIST	<p>New video has emerged that adds to mounting evidence of atrocities carried out while Russia’s military occupied the suburban town of Bucha, northwest of Kyiv.</p> <p>The video shows a cyclist moving along a street in Bucha, dismounting and walking a bicycle around the corner onto a street occupied by Russian soldiers. As soon as the cyclist rounds the turn, a Russian armored vehicle fires several high-caliber rounds along the thoroughfare. A second armored vehicle fires two rounds in the direction of the cyclist. A plume of dust and smoke rises from the scene.</p> <p>The video is aerial footage recorded by Ukraine’s military in late February, when Russian forces still held the town. It has been independently verified by The New York Times.</p> <p>Weeks later, after Russia withdrew from Bucha, a body in civilian clothes was filmed beside a bicycle in this precise location in a second video verified by The Times. The body, with one leg mangled, lies behind a concrete utility pillar that has collapsed from an apparent strike. The damage to the pillar is consistent with high-caliber ammunition. The person’s clothing — a dark blue top and lighter pants — matches the cyclist’s attire.</p> <p>In the aerial footage, the Russian armored vehicles visible on the street appear to be BMD-4 infantry fighting vehicles, which are commonly mounted with a 100-millimeter gun and 30-millimeter cannon, according to a Times analysis of the video. More than 20 Russian military vehicles are positioned near the two vehicles that fired, both on the same street and stretching for blocks along a cross street.</p>

	The military convoy is stationed at an intersection on Yablonska Street, where The Times on Monday documented more than a dozen dead bodies . Satellite images confirmed that the people were killed in March while Russia controlled the town; the new video confirms that a Russian convoy was situated where many of those bodies were found.
Return to Top	<i>Click on source link: new video from Bucha, near Kyiv, adds to mounting evidence of atrocities committed while Russian soldiers occupied the town.</i>

HEADLINE	04/05 Pentagon: Russia campaign far from over
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/5/ukraine-battles-fallout-far-over-pentagon-brass-wa/
GIST	<p>Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine is far from over, and the West must prepare for a years-long commitment to support the government in Kyiv, guard NATO's eastern border and gird for the revival of an era of great-power conflict, top Pentagon leaders said Tuesday.</p> <p>Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley, testifying together on Capitol Hill for the first time since Russia's invasion began more than five weeks ago, painted a grim picture of a world that is "trending toward greater instability," with Russia's attack a likely precursor to much larger, more destructive wars involving the U.S., Russia, Europe and China.</p> <p>The defense officials rejected direct comparisons between Russia's invasion of Ukraine and a potential Chinese offensive on Taiwan, but they acknowledged in sometimes combative testimony before the House Armed Services Committee that Beijing, like Moscow, is looking to upset the international rules-based order and expand its power.</p> <p>While Russian forces have begun to withdraw from the outskirts of Kyiv and refocus their invasion on Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, Gen. Milley cautioned that there will be more bloodshed. The U.S., he said, should make preparations now to aid Ukraine in what is likely to be a lengthy battle.</p> <p>"I do think this is a very protracted conflict. But I think it's at least measured in years. I don't know about a decade, but years for sure," he said. "This is a very extended conflict that Russia has initiated and I think NATO, the United States, Ukraine, and all of the allies and partners that are supporting Ukraine are going to be involved in this for quite some time."</p> <p>Gen. Milley and Mr. Austin faced tough questions from some Republican lawmakers who said that the two men, with President Biden, failed to deter Russian President Vladimir Putin from invading Ukraine and have built up a track record of misplaced policy priorities and bad foreign policy assessments in Afghanistan, Ukraine and elsewhere.</p> <p>On Ukraine specifically, Mr. Austin argued that nothing was going to stop Mr. Putin, short of putting U.S. and NATO troops inside Ukraine, a move that could have sparked a major world war.</p> <p>"I do not believe that our campaign has failed," Mr. Austin said. "This is still in progress and there is a price to be paid by Putin for what he's done."</p> <p>"If we put forces into Ukraine to fight Putin, this would be a different story," he added. "But we made a decision that we weren't going to do that and we made the decision for the right reasons and I support those decisions."</p> <p>But Gen. Milley acknowledged the war could have consequences far beyond the immediate theater in eastern Europe, calling Russia's decision to invade "the greatest threat to peace and security of Europe and perhaps the world in my 42 years of service in uniform."</p> <p>The Pentagon leaders' appearance before lawmakers Tuesday, ostensibly to discuss the Defense Department's fiscal 2023 budget request, came amid global outrage over alleged war crimes Russian troops committed in Bucha, Ukraine, and other regions before pulling back from Kyiv. Shocking</p>

images from Bucha seem to show civilians who were executed at close range, some with bullets to the head and some with their hands bound. Others appeared to have had their throats slashed.

The gruesome photos have sparked fury aimed directly at Mr. Putin and his allies inside the Kremlin. They've also sparked new calls to expel Russia from key international bodies such as the United Nations.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday questioned the effectiveness of the U.N. if Russia, as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, can simply veto almost any major action proposed by the world body.

In a chilling video message to the Security Council, Mr. Zelenskyy described what he had seen and heard Monday on a visit to Bucha.

"Women were raped and killed in front of their children," he said, comparing the atrocities to actions from terrorist groups such as ISIS. "But here it's being done by a member of the United Nations Security Council."

He said Russia has committed similar actions in other areas it has occupied following the invasion of Ukraine.

"Russian troops are deliberately destroying Ukrainian cities to ashes with artillery and air strikes. They are deliberately blocking cities [and] creating mass starvation," Mr. Zelenskyy said. "They are deliberately shooting columns of civilians on the road who are trying to escape."

Mr. Zelenskyy called for a wholesale reform of the United Nations. Allowing a nation such as Russia to wield its veto power without consequences "undermines the whole architecture of global security," he said.

The Kremlin has denied allegations of war crimes. Russian officials this week said the photos and videos coming out of Bucha are little more than Ukrainian propaganda designed to stir up anti-Russian sentiment.

Beefing up in Europe

But the atrocities will provide even more fuel for NATO to harden its defenses in Eastern Europe and ramp up direct security assistance to Ukraine. While there are already tens of thousands of U.S. troops stationed in Europe, Gen. Milley discussed the potential for new American bases and a larger U.S. troop commitment in those Eastern European nations that are on the front lines facing direct Russian aggression.

"My advice would be to create permanent bases but don't permanently station [forces], so you get the effect of permanence by rotational forces cycling through permanent bases," he said. "I believe that a lot of our European allies, especially those such as the Baltics or Poland and Romania, and elsewhere — they're very, very willing to establish permanent bases. They'll build them, they'll pay for them."

The Pentagon's top civilian and military leaders also sparred with lawmakers over the question of whether Russia's invasion of Ukraine may make a Chinese invasion of Taiwan more likely.

Mr. Austin cautioned lawmakers against drawing parallels between the two crises, even though Beijing has given the Kremlin strong rhetorical support in its clash with the West so far.

Rep. Mike Gallagher, Wisconsin Republican, pressed Mr. Austin on whether the Western allies' response to Russia's invasion would have any impact on Chinese President Xi Jinping's calculus regarding Taiwan.

“I think that it’s not advisable to make direct comparisons between Ukraine and Taiwan,” Mr. Austin said. “These are two completely different scenarios, two different theaters.”

“I don’t want to speculate about what is in Mr. Xi’s head,” he added, “but I think as the world looks at this they’ve been impressed by the commitment, the resolve of many countries in the world to resist that kind of behavior.”

Tuesday’s lengthy House hearing also featured a heated clash between Mr. Austin and Rep. Matt Gaetz, Florida Republican, who used his question time to charge that Mr. Austin and other Pentagon leaders have compromised U.S. military superiority in favor of embracing socialist ideologies and teaching critical race theory to recruits.

The accusations from Mr. Gaetz seemed to infuriate the typically calm, reserved Mr. Austin, who became visibly agitated in the face of increasingly intense questioning.

Mr. Austin initially responded by saying he would let the Pentagon’s budget request “speak for itself,” but he responded forcefully when Mr. Gaetz then charged that Russia and China are outpacing the U.S. in hypersonic weapons development.

“What do you mean we’re behind in hypersonics? How do you make that assessment?” Mr. Austin said.

“I don’t know. I make that assessment because China is fielding hypersonic weapons systems and we are still developing them,” Mr. Gaetz replied. “I make that assessment because Russia actually used one.”

“While everyone else in the world seems to be developing capabilities and being more strategic,” Mr. Gaetz continued, “we’ve got time to embrace critical race theory at West Point, to embrace socialism at the National Defense University, to do mandatory pronoun training” in the military.

Mr. Austin then responded with an explosive accusation of his own.

“Again, this is the most capable, the most combat-credible force in the world. It has been and it will be so going forward,” he said. “And this budget helps us to do that. The fact that you’re embarrassed by your country ... I’m sorry for that.”

“I’m embarrassed by your leadership,” Mr. Gaetz responded. “I’m not embarrassed by my country. I wish we were not losing to China. That is so disgraceful that you would sit here and conflate your failures with the failure of the uniformed service members.”

Mr. Austin said charges that U.S. analysts misjudged how the Ukraine war would play out needed to be balanced by the fact that U.S. and Western military support has helped Kyiv largely hold off a bigger invasion force for far longer than many predicted.

“Has it occurred to you that Russia has not overrun Ukraine because of what we’ve done and our allies have done?” Mr. Austin asked Mr. Gaetz. “Have you ever even thought about that?”

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HEADLINE	04/06 Ukraine prosecutors: over 4,000 war crimes
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2022/apr/06/russia-ukraine-war-latest-fresh-sanctions-loom-as-ukraine-says-more-than-4000-alleged-war-crimes-being-investigated-live
GIST	Ukrainian prosecutors say they are investigating 4,684 alleged Russian war crimes after the horror of recent atrocities committed in the Ukrainian town of Bucha came to light, prompting global revulsion and a raft of crippling new sanctions against Russia .

Return to Top	<p>According to figures released by the prosecutors office, a total of 4,468 potential war crimes were listed as under investigation as of Tuesday with the figure growing by hundreds every day. An estimated 167 children have also died as a consequence of Russia's invasion, the agency added.</p> <p>Ukraine's prosecutor general Iryna Venediktova described the recently liberated towns surrounding Kyiv as a "tortured region from hell" and vowed to "punish the inhumans who set it up on our land" at a press briefing held from Bucha on Tuesday.</p> <p>"Russia will be responsible for Bucha in The Hague," she added in a statement published later in the day. "Prosecutors and investigators are already examining the area [Kyiv region] and documenting crimes, so that every perpetrator of these atrocities are brought to justice both in national and international courts," she said.</p> <p>Ukraine's prosecutors office has said pre-trial investigations have begun across the country, including in the regions of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, Mykolaiv, Donetsk and Luhansk.</p> <p>"We are collecting evidence for the national courts and the International Criminal Court in the Hague. Evidence is no longer just war crimes, but crimes against humanity. And we will prove every fact to punish those who tortured, mocked and destroyed Ukrainians," Venediktova said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Zelensky calls for international tribunal
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/05/volodymyr-zelenskiy-un-security-council-russia-war-ukraine-bucha
GIST	<p>Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has given the UN security council a harrowing account of atrocities in his country and demanded that Russian leaders be "brought to justice for war crimes".</p> <p>A day after Joe Biden called for Putin to be held to account, Zelenskiy said there should be an international tribunal similar to the Nuremberg trials of Nazis after the second world war.</p> <p>There has been global revulsion at apparently deliberate civilian killings by Russian troops in Ukraine. Zelenskiy visited the town of Bucha on Monday after officials said the bodies of 410 civilians had been recovered from Kyiv-area towns after Russian troops withdrew.</p> <p>"There is not a single crime that they would not commit there," Zelenskiy said via video link and an interpreter. "The Russians searched for and purposely killed anyone who served our country. They shot and killed women outside their houses. They killed entire families – adults and children – and they tried to burn the bodies."</p> <p>Zelenskiy spoke of civilians "shot and killed in the back of the head after being tortured. Some of them were shot on the streets; others were thrown into the wells. So they died there in suffering."</p> <p>He added: "Civilians were crushed by tanks while sitting in their cars in the middle of the road just for their pleasure."</p> <p>The president detailed the alleged brutality of the Russian forces. "They cut off limbs, slashed their throats, women were raped and killed in front of their children. Their tongues were pulled out only because the aggressor did not hear what they wanted to hear."</p> <p>This was no different, he said, from the behaviour of Islamic State, the terrorist group notorious for its acts of cruelty in Iraq and Syria, but in this instance the perpetrator was Russia, a member of the UN security council. He urged the council to live up to its name. "It is obvious that the key institution of the world which must ensure the coercion of any aggressor to peace simply cannot work effectively."</p>

Zelenskiy also said Bucha was “only one of many examples of what the occupiers have been doing on our land for the past 41 days” and there were many more that the world had yet to learn the full truth about.

He accused Russia of behaving like an ancient coloniser that was abducting children and looting wealth, including gold earrings ripped from civilians’ ears. “Russia wants to turn [Ukraine](#) into silent slaves,” he said.

Zelenskiy added: “The Russian military and those who gave them orders must be brought to justice immediately for war crimes in Ukraine. Anyone who has given criminal orders and carried them out by killing our people will be brought before the tribunal, which should be similar to the Nuremberg tribunal.”

He reminded Russian diplomats that Joachim von Ribbentrop, the foreign affairs minister in Nazi Germany, had “not escaped punishment for crimes in world war two”. Von Ribbentrop was executed in 1946.

After a brief technical glitch, Zelinskiy played a shocking video that displayed corpses, some charred or dismembered, some lying in streets or mass graves, some belonging to children, followed by the simple message: “#StopRussianAggression.”

Earlier the UN human rights office spokesperson Liz Throssell said “all the signs are” that civilians were “directly targeted and directly killed” in Bucha. “This is extremely disturbing,” she said. “And what we must stress is that under international humanitarian law, the deliberate killing of civilians is a war crime.”

Zelenskiy conceded in a TV interview that negotiations with Russia, which were reportedly continuing on Tuesday by video link, remained the only option. But he said talks were now a “challenge” after the killings, adding that it was possible he and Putin would not personally hold talks.

Images of the corpses of what appear to be civilians shot at close range in the streets of Bucha have prompted international condemnation of Moscow, calls for yet harsher sanctions and demands that those responsible be tried for war crimes.

Russia has denied responsibility, suggesting the images are fake or the deaths occurred after Russian forces pulled out. However, satellite photographs taken before the withdrawal show bodies in some of the same places they were later found.

Responding to Zelenskiy’s address, Russia’s U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said that while Bucha was under Russian control, “not a single local person has suffered from any violent action.” He claimed that video footage of bodies in the streets was “a crude forgery” staged by the Ukrainians.

Russia’s defence ministry claimed similarly staged “events” had also been “organised by Ukrainian special forces in Sumy, Konotop, and other cities”, while the parliamentary speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said Bucha was “a provocation”, with “Washington and Brussels the screenwriters and directors and Kyiv the actors.”

However, Maxar Technologies satellite imagery of one Bucha street from 19 and 21 March appears to show several bodies in exactly the same position as in video footage and photos taken this weekend in the same street.

A New York Times analysis of closeups of Bucha’s Yablonska Street concluded, after comparing them with video footage from 1 and 2 April, that many corpses had been there since at least three weeks ago, when Russian forces were in control of the town.

Britain’s UN ambassador, Barbara Woodward, called the images from Bucha “harrowing, appalling, probable evidence of war crimes and possibly a genocide” and said the security council needed “to think about how we deal with that”.

Speaking before he headed to Brussels for meetings of Nato and G7 foreign ministers, Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, said: “What we’ve seen in Bucha is not the random act of a rogue unit. It’s a deliberate campaign to kill, to torture, to rape, to commit atrocities. The reports are more than credible. The evidence is there for the world to see. This reinforces our determination and the determination of countries around the world to make sure that one way or another, one day or another, there is accountability for those who committed these acts, for those who ordered them.”

Peskov said remarks by Biden on Monday calling Putin “a war criminal” and demanding “a war crimes trial” were unacceptable and unworthy of a US president. The White House has also promised fresh sanctions on Moscow this week, and the US is seeking Russia’s suspension from the UN’s human rights council.

As Spain, Italy, Sweden and Denmark joined France and Germany in expelling dozens of Russian diplomats, Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, on Tuesday outlined the bloc’s fifth package of sanctions, saying Moscow was waging a “cruel, ruthless war, also against Ukraine’s civilian population”.

The EU would impose an import ban on coal from Russia, a full transaction ban on key Russian banks, a ban on Russian vessels accessing EU ports, and a ban on Russian and Belarusian road transport operators, among other measures, she said.

The EU sanctions did not include cutting off Russian oil and gas imports. Russia supplies about a third of Europe’s gas and several EU countries are still reluctant to impose measures that could touch off a European energy crisis, despite Putin’s efforts to use energy as a lever to fight back against western sanctions.

Europe’s worst conflict in decades, which began with Russia’s invasion on 24 February, has killed 20,000 people, according to Ukrainian estimates. The UN refugee agency has said more than 4.2 million refugees had fled the country, while the International Organization for Migration said nearly 6.5 million people were internally displaced.

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HEADLINE	04/06 Palestinians battle Israel undercover agents
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/06/palestinians-use-social-media-to-out-the-israeli-undercover-agents-haunting-their-protests
GIST	<p>Last May, as war in Gaza raged and clashes over Palestinian access to Jerusalem intensified, large protests swept across almost every Arab and mixed city in Israel. In Haifa, the Israeli coastal city with a mixed Arab and Jewish population, Yousef Ibrahim attended almost every demonstration.</p> <p>Over the years, the activist and organiser from Daburiyya, an Arab village in the north of Israel, has had his fair share of confrontations with Israeli undercover agents who pose as Arab citizens, known as Mista’arvim. But this time was different, he said.</p> <p>Previously, the agents had been a ghostly presence, more sensed than seen, but this time, activists like Ibrahim, along with legal organisations, sent out warnings on WhatsApp and Telegram groups to raise awareness about the presence of these agents – and instructions on how to avoid being arrested by them.</p> <p>Unlike in the past, when they would run away from Mista’arvim, Ibrahim and his fellow activists had begun openly confronting them and even directly clashing with agents, he said. The shift in the power dynamic might mean that these agents are not as powerful as they once were.</p> <p>“The strongest of us marched in the front row” holding hands to protect the thousands walking behind them at a Haifa protest in May 2021, recalled Ibrahim. “Then the stun grenades and rubber bullets starting going off. They dragged away two girls and a guy, but we managed to pull them back in. It was hard but we did it.”</p>

Mista'arvim, a word derived from Arabic that translates as "those who live among the Arabs", are elite special operations units made up of Jewish, Bedouin and Druze recruits developed by Israel's powerful military and intelligence services. Inside Israel, where Palestinian citizens are subject to civil law rather than the military law that applies in the Occupied Territories, the agents carry out intelligence gathering including observing protests to identify organisers and recurring faces.

The Mista'arvim also have law enforcement powers, and in recent years have become notorious for conducting arrests in which plainclothed agents infiltrate a crowd and then suddenly abduct a suspect.

According to Esmat Omar, a Palestinian expert on Israeli affairs and intelligence, one of the goals of these units is to create an atmosphere of mistrust, fear, and paranoia among protesters "because you can't really know if this person next to you [at a protest] is another protester like you, or an undercover agent that can abduct you at any moment or pull out a weapon".

Palestinian activists, lawyers and young people say Mista'arvim deployment against a country's specific ethnic minority is undemocratic. Israel has only recently admitted to using them against its own citizens.

In a statement, the Israel police said: "The border police's undercover Mista'arvim units operate in various sectors throughout the country, with their main missions being disguised activity against crime gangs, dealing with disorderly conduct with advanced capabilities and fighting terrorism.

"We will continue to act with determination while using all the means at our disposal, all for the sake of maintaining the safety and security of all citizens of the State of Israel."

Messages have spread in WhatsApp groups advising young protesters to cover their faces at all times to avoid being filmed by Mista'arvim; to wear clothes that fully cover their skin so they won't be easily injured by stun grenades or teargas; to write down a lawyer's number on their arms in case they get arrested and their phones are taken away; and to make their waists visible and look out for those whose shirts are not tucked into their trousers, hiding guns in their belts, as they might be Mista'arvim.

Unlike during previous uprisings – most notably the first and second Intifadas – the agents' presence during May's protests in Arab and mixed cities in Israel is well documented due to the rise of social media and mobiles.

Two Palestinians and two Israelis died during the May clashes, while hundreds on both sides were injured, in the worst violence in Israel in years.

This protest was part of a nearly month-long uprising across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories triggered by expulsion threats facing Palestinian families in a neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, which escalated into an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. A total of 256 Palestinians, including 66 children, were killed, along with 13 people in Israel.

Although Palestinian citizens of Israel make up about a fifth of the population, the community have often been seen as passive observers in the 73-year-long conflict. In May, however, they showed an unprecedented level of solidarity by protesting in large numbers.

The protests turned violent in mixed cities and a widespread campaign of arrests began: about 2,000 people were arrested by the Israeli police, 91% of whom were Arab, according to police reports.

Embedded in this chaos were Mista'arvim. Rawan Bisharat, an activist from Jaffa, said these units were no longer bothering to operate in the shadows. "For me, it's like they came out of the closet." She recalled that at one Jaffa protest she suspected one man to be an undercover agent. "To my surprise, he said: 'Yes, I'm here, and there are another 19 of us here, but we are not bothering you, are we?'"

Afnan Khalifa, a lawyer and activist from I'bilin, alleged that Mista'arvim arrests were usually more violent than those of regular police because they did not wear identifying name badges. "They feel freer to use violence because they are anonymous," she said.

Palestinian citizens of Israel have long complained that their government and police are working against them. Sixty-five laws in the Israeli constitution explicitly discriminate against the country's Arab population and classify them as second-class citizens, according to the Adalah Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel.

In March 2021, Adalah sued the Israeli police over the illegal deployment of undercover Mista'arvim agents who were filmed violently arresting and attacking protesters. Adalah says these practices violate the democratic right to peaceful protest and argues that the Mista'arvim presence in Arab cities challenges the status of Israel as a democracy.

Creating two separate systems of law enforcement was "one of the characteristics of the apartheid regimes that are prohibited in the world and which contravene international law", said the Adalah lawyer Wissam Sharaf.

The Hebrew University law faculty's Ido Rosenzweig agrees. "Israel has an ongoing problem with racial discrimination under international law," he said, so "if the goal is racial profiling, then you have a problem."

However, he added that there were no limitations on the use of undercover units for law enforcement purposes within the state borders, "as long as they identify themselves as a law enforcement agent [when conducting an arrest], and they're operating in a manner that won't cause additional harm or risk anyone's life."

In October 2020 several intelligence officers in civilian dress arrested Yusuf Ibrahim at a protest, interrogated him for three days and then released him without charge. He said that his arrest occurred after a Mista'arvim agent he had outed at a previous protest reported him to the police, claiming Ibrahim was inciting violence and threatening to kidnap soldiers. The police did not find any evidence of that.

Ibrahim said he would continue to organise protests and be on the frontlines chanting and leading the crowds, but he envisioned a long struggle against a shadowy adversary.

"He was out to get me because I was out to get him. I still see him at every protest I attend, lurking in the back, watching my every move, and reporting back to the police. Every single protest."

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HEADLINE	04/05 Film incentives for more movies to WA
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article260142970.html
GIST	<p>Legislation to incentivize more movie production in Washington state was signed into law last week, increasing tax breaks for those looking to film in the state from \$3.5 million to \$15 million annually.</p> <p>The Motion Picture Competitiveness Program is run by a non-profit organization called Washington Filmworks whose "mission is to create economic development opportunities by building and enhancing the competitiveness, profile and sustainability of Washington State's film industry."</p> <p>Gov. Jay Inslee signed the bill into law March 31.</p> <p>In addition to the business and operating taxes that Washington Filmworks can now award, it also increases B&O tax credit limits for individuals to \$1 million annually, up from \$750,000 per year.</p>

Provisions in the bill aim to draw more film production to rural areas by committing 20 percent of funding to prospective filmmakers who wish to make movies in those places. Another 20 percent will be set aside for films about marginalized communities.

“Increasing the funding for the MPCP will make Washington a more competitive location to shoot films and our state will reap the economic benefits,” said Rep. Marcus Riccelli, who sponsored the bill. “By focusing on marginalized and rural communities, this bill helps ensure that the economic benefits of this program are fairly distributed around the state.”

The Spokane Democrat noted that “filming locations are often chosen based on the incentives that states offer.”

Joe Chianese, Senior Vice President and Practice Leader of Production Incentives at Entertainment Partners, told McClatchy Tuesday that everyone in the state should see benefits from film productions.

“Encouraging producers to go in more rural jurisdictions is definitely going to help those communities, as well as make sure the entire state feels the benefit.”

Chianese said that Washingtonians can expect to see some immediate benefit of the new law because of the spending done locally by crew members, and spending by production companies who are trying to set up. In the long-term, he said more businesses could start relocating to those areas where filming is taking place, further helping local economies.

He also noted that the 2030 sunset clause on the bill will be especially attractive for television series because if a series becomes a hit, they don’t want to have to pack up and leave for other states that are providing those incentives, especially in the middle of production.

There are currently not enough crew, locations, or studios for the “production boom” going on all over the world right now, Chianese added. While it is important for the Washington program to allow residents and non-residents, the program will be most beneficial for residents, he said.

The new law will go into effect in June, and filmmakers can apply on the Washington Filmworks production incentive program page.

The Motion Picture Competitiveness Program initially became law in 2006 but funding was later axed in 2011.

Several well-known movies were filmed in Washington state: “10 Things I Hate About You,” filmed in Tacoma; “The Deer Hunter,” partly filmed in the North Cascades; and “Sleepless in Seattle,” filmed in the city. David Lynch’s TV series “Twin Peaks” also was filmed predominantly in North Bend.

Many other states offer programs meant to incentivize film production in their states such as California, Oregon and Colorado. California has the largest cap for incentives in the country, coming in at \$330 million per year.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Storms batter aging power grid
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Storms-batter-aging-power-grid-as-climate-17060281.php
GIST	<p>Power outages from severe weather have doubled over the past two decades across the U.S., as a warming climate stirs more destructive storms that cripple broad segments of the nation’s aging electrical grid, according to an Associated Press analysis of government data.</p> <p>Forty states are experiencing longer outages — and the problem is most acute in regions seeing more extreme weather, U.S. Department of Energy data shows. The blackouts can be harmful and even deadly for the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable communities.</p>

Power grid maintenance expenses are skyrocketing as utilities upgrade decades-old transmission lines and equipment. And that means customers who are hit with more frequent and longer weather outages also are paying more for electricity.

“The electric grid is our early warning,” said University of California, Berkeley grid expert Alexandra von Meier. “Climate change is here and we’re feeling real effects.”

The AP analysis found:

—The number of outages tied to severe weather rose from about 50 annually nationwide in the early 2000s to more than 100 annually on average over the past five years.

—The frequency and length of power failures are at their highest levels since reliability tracking began in 2013 — with U.S. customers on average experiencing more than eight hours of outages in 2020.

—Maine, Louisiana and California each experienced at least a 50% increase in outage duration even as residents endured mounting interruption costs over the past several years.

—In California alone, power losses have affected tens of thousands of people who rely on electricity for medical needs.

The AP analyzed electricity disturbance data submitted by utilities to the U.S. Department of Energy to identify weather-related outages. The analysis also examined utility-level data covering outages of more than five minutes, including how long they lasted and how often they occurred. Department officials declined comment.

Driving the increasingly commonplace blackouts are weather disasters now rolling across the country with seasonal consistency.

Winter storms called nor'easters barrel into New England and shred decrepit electrical networks. Hot summers spawn hurricanes that pound the Gulf Coast and Eastern Seaboard, plunging communities into the dark, sometimes for months. And in fall, West Coast windstorms trigger forced power shutoffs across huge areas to protect against deadly wildfires from downed equipment.

MAINE

The power grid's fragility hit home for Lynn Mason Courtney, 78, a blind cancer survivor living in a retirement community in Bethel, Maine, a rural town of 2,500 along the Androscoggin River.

When Courtney's building lost power and heat for three days following a 2020 winter storm, the temperature inside fell to 42 degrees (6 degrees Celsius). Extended loss of heat isn't something most people are prepared for in a cold state such as Maine, she said, and one resident relied on old camping gear to try to keep warm.

"I developed hypothermia. I was dehydrated," Courtney said. "Two people on oxygen had nowhere to go. They just stayed in the apartment and hoped like hell that the power would come back on."

Winter storms left more than 500,000 without power in Maine in 2017 — more than a third of the state's population. And in recent years, the state has seen record numbers of weather-related interruptions. The state never recorded more than five per year until 2018, but in 2020 it had 12, AP's analysis found.

As with much of the nation, Maine's electrical infrastructure was built decades ago and parts are more than 50 years old, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers.

The brittle condition of the state's power grid and repeated disruptions worsened by climate change worry Courtney.

“When the power goes out, it’s extraordinarily difficult and dangerous,” she said. “If you’re disabled, it’s scary. You’re not safe.”

As the planet warms, storms that threaten power reliability are likely to hit some areas harder, said Penn State University meteorology professor Colin Zarzycki.

A warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, increasing energy packed by storms no matter the season. The phenomenon produces, for example, increasingly destructive tropical hurricanes that strike the Southeast and Pacific storms that cause flooding on the West Coast.

On the East Coast, some nor’easters will convert to rainstorms as freezing weather shifts north. But those that fall as snow could be bigger than ever, Zarzycki said.

And some areas will get less snow but more sleet and freezing rain that can wreak greater damage on electrical systems, because ice-laden equipment is easier for winds to topple.

“Those really high-end nor’easters, the ones that take over CNN for days, those are going to occur with the same or increased frequency,” Zarzycki said. “Where these events occur could lead to increased vulnerability, because the infrastructure is not prepared.”

LOUISIANA

The combination of at-risk infrastructure and climate change can be deadly: After Hurricane Ida knocked out power to much of coastal Louisiana last year, heat killed or contributed to the deaths of at least 21 people, local coroners reported.

In New Orleans alone, heat caused nine deaths and contributed to 10 others, according to coroner’s office records. Most who died were elderly and African American. Spokesman Jason Melancon could not say which victims did not have power, but 75% of the city was still without power when most died.

David Sneed, 65, died in his wheelchair on the 12th-floor of the subsidized apartment where he’d been without power for several days after the storm hit Aug. 29.

Sneed was obese and had a cognitive impairment that made walking difficult, so he used the wheelchair most of the time, said Rev. Ken Taylor, a professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where Sneed was a doctoral student.

Three days after the storm, Sneed called Taylor in near-panic and said he was unable to leave because the building’s elevator was not working. So the next day, Taylor went to Sneed’s apartment to bring him food and water — and it felt like 100 degrees (38 degrees Celsius), with no windows open.

When the professor returned the following day, he found the elevator was working. Sneed said he’d go down to the first floor where it was cooler. But when the reverend came back to check on him again, Sneed didn’t answer.

When an apartment employee opened the door, Sneed’s body was in the bedroom, slumped in his wheelchair.

“I speculate that he had rolled into his bedroom to put on some pants to go downstairs ... and the heat or his heart or a combination of the two” killed him, Taylor said. The coroner’s office said Sneed died from the heat.

The financial toll of storms is huge — Louisiana’s largest power company has said it will cost an estimated \$4 billion to repair damage from the hurricanes of 2020 and 2021. State regulators have approved \$3.2 billion of that, which Entergy Corp. estimates will add \$8 a month for 15 years to the average residential bill.

Problems with the grid and costs to fix them are expected to grow in coming decades, said U.C. Berkeley's von Meier.

Much of the grid was built decades ago, and the majority of power transmission facilities are now at least 25 years old. That's forced utilities to quadruple spending on the U.S. transmission system since 2000 to about \$40 billion annually, according to Department of Energy data.

Billions more will be spent, with costs passed on to consumers, but those efforts won't keep up with problems from climate change, von Meier said. "Rates will go up, reliability will go down," she said.

CALIFORNIA

In California, widespread anger erupted in recent years as utilities such as Pacific Gas and Electric Co. imposed deliberate power outages to guard against wildfires.

Almost 200 California wildfires over the past decade were traced to downed power lines that ignited trees or brush, including a record 41 blazes in 2021. Among them was a 2018 fire that ripped through the Sierra Nevada foothills town of Paradise and killed 85 people, resulting in criminal involuntary manslaughter convictions of PG&E. Another fire blamed on PG&E last year burned almost 1 million acres (390,000 hectares), 1,300 buildings and much of the Sierra Nevada town of Greenville.

Now when wind storms are forecast and the landscape is dry, utilities cut off power to hundreds of thousands of customers, sometimes for multiple days, to reduce fire risk.

Beyond closing businesses and causing food to spoil in refrigerators, outages can be life-threatening for people with health conditions whose medical equipment requires electricity.

An AP review of utility filings with California regulators found nearly 160,000 instances of power shutoffs to customers with medical needs from 2017 to 2021. PG&E was responsible for more than 80%.

"We know there has been a trade-off between safety and reliability," said PG&E Vice President Sumeet Singh. He said shutoffs were a last resort to guard against fires and that the company has reduced the number of people affected through better forecasting of hazardous weather and more localized shutdowns.

Richard Skaff, a paraplegic who is an advocate for the disabled in Northern California, said he has endured two forced outages each lasting five days over the past several years. He was fortunate to have a generator to keep his electric wheelchair powered and his house heated, but said many others with disabilities live on minimal incomes and struggle to get by during outages.

"If we're going to allow PG&E and others to de-energize the grid, if we accept that as a concept, you have to look at the implications of that first," Skaff said. "You have to determine the effects on the most vulnerable people."

PG&E and other utilities have sought to lessen the impacts by notifying people with needs in advance of shutoffs and setting up response centers where they can charge their phones or other essential devices.

Utilities also have started creating "microgrids" — local electrical networks that can disconnect from the main grid and operate independently to reduce the scope of shutoffs.

"We're very sensitive to the needs of our customers," said Southern California Edison Vice President Erik Takayesu. "We run risk calculations to ensure we're making the right decisions. But it's really hard ... Each individual customer will have their own individual experience. The best we can do is help the customer prepare."

The state utilities commission and some local officials have said the industry's efforts are insufficient for outages that can cover large portions of the state and affect numerous towns and cities.

By the end of this year, PG&E and Southern California Edison expect to have spent almost \$20 billion since 2020 on wildfire prevention. The companies are cutting back vegetation near their equipment and putting up stronger power lines. PG&E plans to bury 10,000 miles (16,000 kilometers) of lines over 10 years so they won't be exposed to falling trees.

PG&E's customers paid on average almost \$140 more last year versus the previous year to avert wildfires from their operations.

Rising electric bills because of extreme weather have outsized impact on low income households and communities of color, said John Howat, a senior energy analyst at National Consumer Law Center. These communities devote a higher proportion of their income to home energy bills, so they get hit harder than wealthier households.

Since it will take utilities many years to carry out their wildfire prevention efforts, companies will continue to use forced shutoffs to protect against wildfires.

The intentional outages help utilities avoid liability for deadly wildfires, but they amount to recurring crises for power customers who are disabled, elderly or with special needs, said Aaron Carruthers, executive director of the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Unless more is done to prepare needy communities, shutoffs will continue to put lives at risk, threaten people's health and leave vulnerable people scared, Carruthers said.

Gabriela Madrigal, a 34-year-old Santa Barbara resident who needs a powered wheelchair to get around, said she's endured perhaps a dozen preventive shutoffs by Southern California Edison over the past several years.

Madrigal — who has a debilitating, neurological condition called spina bifida — lives in low-income city housing with her mother, who is her primary caregiver.

Each time the power blinks out, it catches them off guard, Madrigal said. When the outages last hours or days, her wheelchair goes dead. The chair weighs several hundred pounds with Madrigal in it, and her mother has trouble moving it.

So when the power goes off and no one else is around to help, “we're pretty much stuck,” Madrigal said. “It takes a toll on someone.”

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HEADLINE	04/05 Alaska Air cancelation wave rolls to 5 th day
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/fewer-canceled-flights-as-alaska-airlines-cancelation-wave-rolls-into-fifth-day/
GIST	<p>Dozens of Alaska Airlines flights had been canceled Tuesday morning, as a wave of cancellations roiling the airline since Friday appeared to ebb.</p> <p>The airline, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport’s largest carrier, had announced 22 new cancellations as of Tuesday afternoon, bringing the total number of flights canceled that day to 32, according to FlightAware.com. Twenty Alaska flights scheduled for Wednesday had been canceled, as had another 20 cut for Thursday.</p> <p>Staffing shortages have been largely to blame for hundreds of cancellations that have delayed or stranded tens of thousands of passengers.</p>

While pilots are in short supply across the airline industry, Alaska has been hit harder by the pilot shortage than most of its competitors. The airline, currently in an increasingly bitter standoff with the union representing its pilots over a new contract, has lost dozens of pilots this year to other major carriers.

The cancellations have grounded tens of thousands of passengers, some of whom reported 10-hour wait times on Alaska's customer service line.

Constance von Muehlen, Alaska's chief operating officer, said in a statement Saturday that the airline is "doing everything we can" to support affected passengers.

"We know the sudden cancellation of their travel plans is frustrating — we apologize to all of our guests who we let down," read a statement posted on the airline's website.

An internal Alaska Air memo indicated an unanticipated shortage of pilots is driving the cancellations.

"Our operational performance today was below the level many of us expect," Capt. John Ladner, Alaska's vice president of flight operations, wrote in a Friday email to pilots. "The primary driver for our performance right now is the shortage of pilots we have available to fly versus what was planned when we built our April schedule in January."

Ladner cited the level of attrition as a major factor, and said Alaska was offering 150% of pay to pilots willing to pick up extra flights. The airline's management has been locked in contract negotiations with the Air Line Pilots Association union for three years.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Concrete for West Seattle Bridge repair job
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/concrete-begins-to-flow-at-west-seattle-bridge-repair-job/
GIST	<p>Repair crews at the West Seattle Bridge received fresh concrete early Tuesday, despite a 4-month-old truckers' strike that's disrupted regional construction projects.</p> <p>Fresh slurry flowed overnight from a Cadman company mixer, down a chute, and into blue wheelbarrows, as captured in a photo distributed by the Seattle Department of Transportation.</p> <p>Mayor Bruce Harrell claimed partial credit for the delivery, while thanking both the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 174 and the Cadman company, which worked out a temporary deal to deliver the concrete. "This collaborative effort is rooted in a desire to support our communities and advance the greater public good – and for that we should all be immensely grateful," Harrell's statement said.</p> <p>Tuesday morning's batch was aimed toward hardening some newly repaired expansion joints, where built-in gaps between roadway decks accommodate the bridge's normal thermal movement.</p> <p>SDOT and contractor Kraemer North America have yet to attack the more complex job of building concrete anchors within the hollow girders, where dozens of new steel cables will be installed, each exerting 1 million pounds of lateral force on those future anchors. That phase requires premium "self-consolidating" concrete, which flows and hardens without leaving tiny air pockets that can trigger future cracks.</p> <p>The anchor mixture was tested by a Seattle Public Utilities materials lab, and approved last week, according to City Councilmember Lisa Herbold of West Seattle. Approximately 30 truckloads will be required.</p> <p>"We're hoping to get the specialized concrete within the next few weeks," said SDOT spokesperson Mariam Ali.</p>

	<p>As of Tuesday afternoon, officials haven't identified a date for anchor-building, nor to reopen the seven-lane crossing. Kraemer's original schedule targeted a June 30 completion, followed by SDOT heavy-load testing in early July. But that was predicated on concrete deliveries by Feb. 20. Delays are likely.</p> <p>The highrise box-girder bridge, completed in 1984, has been barricaded since March 23, 2020, when SDOT structures director Matt Donahue diagnosed runaway shear cracks. Many of the 100,000 daily drivers and 20,000 transit passengers who normally use the bridge are working from home, curtailing leisure trips, or detouring as far as 6 miles, via the First Avenue South bridge.</p> <p>The Teamsters announced in mid-March that 40 union drivers offered to resume work at Cadman, while still continuing the broader strike, in which 330 members walked out Dec. 3 as negotiations broke down over wages and other issues.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Seattle mayor rejects bonds to fix bridges
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/seattle-mayor-balks-at-100m-bond-sale-to-fix-old-bridges/
GIST	<p>Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell's administration has rejected a City Council budget authorization to sell \$100 million in bonds to rehabilitate the city's ailing bridges.</p> <p>The Seattle Department of Transportation doesn't have enough projects shovel-ready to spend it this year, said a letter from interim director Kristen Simpson. She said SDOT can try for federal dollars; bridge projects could appear on the next property-tax levy, expected in 2024.</p> <p>Councilmember Alex Pedersen, who chairs the transportation committee, called those the same bureaucratic excuses that he's heard for two years. The council passed the bond ordinance last November, as the two-year closure of the cracked West Seattle Bridge illustrated the consequences of bridge failures.</p> <p>"The decision of the executive branch of our city government to kick the can down the road, yet again, makes it clear that if another Seattle bridge breaks or closes and strands people, freight and transit, the fault would be with the Harrell Administration," Pedersen declared in a statement Monday. Hours later, Pedersen said "on reflection, that came across as too critical."</p> <p>Simpson's letter said there's no clear method to repay \$100 million in new debt without trimming other services. She suggests awaiting a Roadway Structures Business Practice Upgrade report, due next year, to guide spending policies.</p> <p>"The Move Seattle Levy expiration in 2024 also provides an opportunity, in upcoming years, to have a broad community conversation about future transportation needs, priorities, and a comprehensive and stable transportation funding strategy," she added.</p> <p>The tug of war over bridge money dates to fall 2020, when council members Pedersen, Lisa Herbold and Andrew Lewis proposed earmarking a new \$20 car-tab fee — \$7.2 million annually — to reduce what a city audit identified as a maintenance backlog of \$34 million a year.</p> <p>But following an SDOT community engagement process, and feedback that bridge spending would shortchange walk-bike needs, council members chose a different tack. They dedicated most of the car-tab fees toward neighborhood safety, but also told then-director Sam Zimbabwe to produce a \$75 million bridge work plan to go with a huge bond sale.</p> <p>"In a city carved by waterways and ravines within a hazardous earthquake zone, we rely on our bridges to connect every community, enable all modes of transportation and sustain our economy. Residents, businesses and workers expect and deserve to have their bridges open and safe, so it's important to accelerate needed upgrades and repairs to the extent we can," Pedersen told council members Monday.</p>

The mayor's office replied late Monday that it's "fiscally unsound" to park \$100 million in the bank and pay debt service this year. "Mayor Harrell hasn't said 'no' to bridge bonds, he's said 'not yet.'"

A year ago, SDOT's structures division listed \$10 million in urgent and unfunded major renovations, such as new electronic drawspan components. Months have passed, but Simpson's letter said the agency located \$6.5 million for that category, plus \$8.7 million in ongoing bridge maintenance.

[University Bridge](#) remains structurally deficient, with crumbling columns north of the Ship Canal. The Fremont, Ballard and University drawbridges are a century old, while one lane is closed on a weak Fourth Avenue South Bridge above the Argo freight rail yard.

SDOT previously postponed [five of 16 seismic projects](#) promised to voters, including Fremont and Ballard Bridge strengthening, when unanticipated foundation costs and inflation sent prices skyrocketing.

Simpson said the city can mix money sources to fund \$64.2 million in seismic and repair tasks in the pipeline, plus the already approved \$102.7 million high-rise West Seattle Bridge rescue. Her scenario would cover design but not construction at the Ballard and Fremont bridges.

By avoiding \$3.1 million in bond interest for 2022, she said the city can afford to renovate those University Bridge piers.

In dwelling on financial risk, Simpson's letter overlooks a political risk: that SDOT's updated menu of bridge needs will collide with other community requests — sidewalks, [Aurora Avenue](#) improvements, a delayed streetcar, [traffic-calming](#) barriers, [pothole filling](#), light-rail tunnels, and more — while planning that 2024 ballot measure.

Pedersen commented, "It's not good for credibility of the next levy to have unfulfilled bridge promises," while Jamie Housen, a spokesperson for Harrell, said "he's committed to addressing this bridge infrastructure, one way or another."

Councilmember Lewis, whose district includes Magnolia, called Harrell's decision disheartening for residents hoping to replace the rusty Magnolia Bridge. On the other hand, options there range [from \\$190 million to \\$420 million](#) — far beyond current budgets.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Student loan pause extended thru August
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/white-house-to-extend-student-loan-pause-through-august/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration plans to freeze federal student loan payments through Aug. 31, extending a moratorium that has allowed millions of Americans to postpone payments during the coronavirus pandemic, according to an administration official familiar with the White House's decision-making.</p> <p>Student loan payments were scheduled to resume May 1 after being halted since early in the pandemic. But following calls from Democrats in Congress, the White House plans to give borrowers additional time to prepare for payments.</p> <p>The action applies to more than 43 million Americans who owe a combined \$1.6 trillion in student debt held by the federal government, according to the latest data from the Education Department. That includes more than 7 million borrowers who have defaulted on student loans, meaning they are at least 270 days late on payments.</p> <p>Borrowers will not be asked to make payments until after Aug. 31, and interest rates are expected to remain at 0% during that period.</p> <p>The extension was first reported Tuesday by Bloomberg.</p>

Democrats on education panels in the House and Senate recently urged President Joe Biden to extend the moratorium through the end of the year, citing continued economic upheaval.

Sen. Patty Murray said more time is needed to help Americans prepare for repayment and to rethink the government's existing system for repaying student debt.

"It is ruining lives and holding people back," she said in a statement last month. "Borrowers are struggling with rising costs, struggling to get their feet back under them after public health and economic crises, and struggling with a broken student loan system — and all this is felt especially hard by borrowers of color."

Murray called on the Biden administration to lift all borrowers out of default to provide a "fresh start" following the pandemic.

The decision is being made amid rising concern that large numbers of Americans would quickly fall behind if payments restarted in May.

In March, the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank warned that resuming loan payments could place a heavy burden on borrowers who faced financial hardship during the pandemic. It said the impact would be hardest on Black families, who are more likely to rely on student loans to pay for college.

"Serious delinquency rates for student debt could snap back from historic lows to their previous highs in which 10% or more of the debt was past due," the bank said.

The Trump administration initially gave Americans the option to suspend loan payments in March 2020, and Congress made it automatic soon after. The pause was extended twice by the Trump administration and twice more under Biden.

It remains in question whether Biden will pursue widespread debt forgiveness to reduce the nation's student debt. Some Democrats in Congress have pressed Biden to use executive action to cancel \$50,000 for all student loan borrowers, saying it would jumpstart the economy and help Black Americans who on average face higher levels of student debt.

Last year, Biden asked the Education and Justice departments to review the legality of widespread debt cancellation, but no decision has been announced. Biden previously said he supports canceling up to \$10,000, but he argued it should be done through congressional action.

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HEADLINE	04/05 WSP struggles to recruit diversity
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/community/facing-race/washington-state-patrol-diversity/281-2bbeffcb-970d-4a2f-b8b4-f95c3de1669e
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — In Washington's largest law enforcement agency, diversity has been a shortcoming for decades.</p> <p>Washington State Patrol (WSP) data shows the majority of state troopers are white men, and KING 5's Facing Race unit found lawmakers and former cadets have called for change within the agency for years.</p> <p>A new state law looks to change the narrative. In March, Gov. Jay Inslee signed a bill that puts pressure on WSP to attract and retain cadets of color.</p> <p>The measure will cost the state patrol \$1.3 million. It includes the commission of an independent study into retention and recruitment efforts in addition to setting agency benchmarks and providing legislative oversight of WSP's progress.</p>

Old problem; new push

"I'm proud to work for an agency that is willing to say that publicly, 'This is a problem, and we're trying to fix it,'" said Sgt. Johnna Batiste, who is part of a group of African American commissioned female troopers that call themselves the "Fab Four." The group includes Troopers Shaneka Phillips, Monica Matthews and Briana Feller.

The four women range in age and experience level. While they work in different specialties, including recruitment and testing, they all say they feel a responsibility to recruit and mentor candidates of color.

Feller joined WSP as a single mother in 2017 and has no family ties to the agency or law enforcement. Matthews, Phillips and Batiste all had family in the military or law enforcement who inspired them to join WSP's ranks.

Matthews, an Air Force veteran, works as one of four polygraph examiners for WSP. Phillips has been with WSP since 2011 and now works with their Special Operations Division in Olympia. Batiste oversees cadet classes and specializes in control tactics and weapons programs. She is also the daughter of the current WSP chief, John Batiste.

"The State Patrol has been very supportive of allowing us to do more like community outreach type events or just attending different community type of scenarios, just so we can recruit more, and people are getting the visual. Young girls ... they're seeing us," said Phillips.

The Fab Four's efforts are WSP's new answer to a very old problem: historically, most Washington State Patrol troopers have been white men.

According to WSP 2021 demographic data, 86% of troopers are white men.

"It's very much a good old boy's club," said Liz Griffin, a former WSP cadet. "And if you don't fit into that good old boy's club mold, what they want you to be, if you don't fit into that club, then you're kind of seen as a threat."

In 2007, Griffin spent nine months in WSP's training academy as a cadet. Fourteen years ago, Griffin sued the patrol for discrimination, saying she was punished based on her sex and race.

"I was told that I was too smart for my own good," said Griffin. "And I should probably consider another profession. I was the only female of color."

Diversity in 2003 versus 2022

A KING 5 Facing Race analysis of Department of Justice and state data found diversity in the state patrol has declined. Compared with 2003, the patrol now employs fewer Black, Asian and Native American troopers.

"I don't recall seeing any that looked like me," said Griffin. "And that was another reason I wanted to do it was younger people need to see themselves in professions like that."

According to Griffin's lawsuit, she was at the top of her class and "received consistently excellent performance evaluations." But doing well, she said, didn't equate to being treated well.

"My badge number was supposed to be 6-6-8. They would refer to me as 'sex sex eight' instead. Being like 'sexy female,'" said Griffin. "When we would do be doing scenarios ... we'd be practicing on each other. When it was my turn to be the suspect, they put me in the back of the car, and they'd be like, 'Well, this is right. This is how it's supposed to be. This is what it really looks like.'"

One week before graduation, Griffin failed a practical exam. A 2009 WSP training manual states cadets should be given "retraining" and a "make-up exam."

Her lawsuit says, "Caucasian male candidates received retraining before retests."

But Griffin didn't get that accommodation. Instead, she was fired.

"I've experienced racism and sexism before," Griffin said. "But this just felt like a bigger blow. Because it ... crushes your dreams, because people, especially little kids, do see police officers like on a pedestal and that they can do no wrong, but it was like, 'Wow, it really is like this.'"

Washington state Sen. John Lovick of District 44, who was a WSP trooper for more than 30 years, said he thinks diversity in the WSP is "absolutely horrible."

"We want to see an agency that reflects the community that we serve," said Lovick.

Lovick has been pushing WSP leadership to do a better job attracting and retaining diverse candidates. "This is 2022," Lovick said. "There are only 30 Black troopers, other minorities, but it still has to be a pretty lonely world for most of them."

Report: Many candidates of color screened out

A 2021 state study into WSP's retention and recruitment practices showed cadets of color were failing the agency's psychological evaluation at a higher rate than their white counterparts. And there's a lot at stake – if you flunk the psychological evaluation, you're out.

According to data compiled in the report, 36% of white candidates didn't pass WSP's psychological evaluation compared to 44% of Latinx candidates, 67% of Asian candidates and 60% of Black candidates who didn't pass the psychological examination.

"I think the screening process was obviously a problem. Most agencies, they just don't reject as many people," said Lovick.

Dr. Daniel Clark, WSP's longtime psychologist, was the man responsible for administering the tests. Clark faced criticism from lawmakers after that 2021 state report showed candidates of color were rejected from the patrol at high rates. The report found, "Every focus group and multiple key executives reported concerns of bias in the psychological evaluation process."

Clark kept his job. He's been reassigned at the state patrol and now deals with counseling and training. KING 5 reached out to Clark for comment but has not heard back from him.

Griffin was surprised to hear that Clark still had an active role in the WSP.

"Blows my mind," said Griffin. "Like I cannot believe after what was found that he would still have any type of role. That just shows you like there has to be change within the department. To see change, things have to be completely deconstructed and rebuilt from the bottom up."

Griffin doesn't see that happening.

In 2014, her case was ultimately settled out of court for \$20,000 with the agency making no "admissions of liability." After leaving the WSP training academy, Griffin went back into the mental health field. She received her master's in social work and went on to get her doctorate in education.

Griffin said WSP missed out when they discriminated against her.

"[I am] someone who really cares about people, someone who genuinely just wanted to be out there helping individuals," said Griffin.

State Patrol Chief John Batiste would not answer questions for this story.

But the chief's daughter, Sgt. Batiste, was made available to speak about the efforts of the Fab Four. We asked Batiste if she had experienced discrimination or felt othered within the agency.

"Not othered because of the color of my skin, othered because of my gender," Batiste said. "Yes. I don't think necessarily that color plays a part in that, it just is, you're 5-foot-2 and you're underestimated."

"The academy has grown so much in diversity. We have a team of pretty diverse recruiters," said Trooper Feller.

We repeatedly asked for a racial breakdown and photos of the latest WSP Cadet class. Our inquiries were not answered.

"I feel like we have, we still have a lot of work to do," said Trooper Phillips.

[Last year, WSP announced](#) they had signed onto the 30x30 pledge, a nationwide effort within police departments to increase representation in all ranks and promote gender equity. According to the WSP, "The ultimate goal of the 30x30 Initiative is to reach 30 percent of women in police recruit classes by 2030 and to ensure policing agencies are truly representative of the jurisdiction the agency serves. While 30x30 focuses on advancing women in policing, these principles are applicable to all demographic diversity, not just gender."

The Fab Four said they hope their increased recruitment efforts will steer the agency to better represent the population it serves.

According to a statement provided by WSP, high vacancy rates across all law enforcement agencies have increased competition for candidates of color. They say they continue to modify their hiring and training practices to eliminate any unintended barriers for candidates of color.

Here is the full WSP statement:

"The Washington State Patrol is committed to diversifying our workforce and has been intentional in our efforts to recruit, train and retain qualified individuals that are more reflective of the state and communities we serve. Recognizing that over the years, law enforcement in the United States has been an industry dominated by historical majorities in both race and gender, over the past several years, we have taken numerous steps to bring a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion into our hiring and operations. We have increased and diversified our recruiting staff as well as substantially increased our intentional outreach to women and communities of color on many fronts. We are also committed to taking down any barriers identified to making working for us an attractive, safe, and satisfying career path for all qualified candidates.

"Part of our process of continuous growth has been to bring in outside consultants to gain their independent evaluation and recommendations for specific systems modifications that would make our agency and our industry more appealing. We take these challenges very seriously and have and are implementing many of their recommendations along with changes generated by our own internal reviews of our recruiting, vetting, hiring, training and deployment strategies. One of the changes we have made occurred in 2021 when our Chief decided it was time for a permanent pivot from in-house psychological testing. That service was moved to outside contractors and Dr. Clark was then able to provide fuller focus and leadership on other programs already under his leadership like the management of our peer support and employee wellness programs and other internal mental health and wellness efforts in addition to critical incident trauma counseling for our staff. As you might imagine given the nature of the work, those efforts are of great importance with continuous demand.

"While we have greatly increased our efforts at outreach to women and communities of color in our recruiting and continue to modify our hiring and training practices to eliminate any unintended barriers to service, we must all recognize that the allure of careers in law enforcement has been significantly dampened in our society over the past several years. With so many agencies now recruiting in the same smaller universe of interested and qualified applicants, our challenges filling the growing number of

vacancies continue to grow. We know there are no 'light-switch' solutions that will quickly bring significant improvement but we continue to increase our recruitment resources and focus and are aggressively developing strategies and tactics that will hopefully help us improve long-term trust and increase the allure of law enforcement as a career over time in all communities."

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HEADLINE	04/05 Seattle Chinatown-ID businesses struggle
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/money/business/small-business/chinatown-international-district-businesses-work-to-recover-from-pandemic/281-136b11a4-f01f-4682-9ada-1296ae28fc07
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Businesses in Seattle’s Chinatown-International District are facing persistent struggles as they work to recover from the pandemic.</p> <p>It is something the U.S. Small Business Administration is taking notice of, and at the regional office, they say they want to help.</p> <p>"The greater neighborhood is called Chinatown-International District, but we are in a section of it called Japantown," said Binko Chiong-Bisbee.</p> <p>Chiong-Bisbee has owned Kobo Shop and Gallery at Higo since 2004.</p> <p>Not far away, Yen Ma runs her business, Gan Bei.</p> <p>"Chinatown is usually bustling," said Ma.</p> <p>But not long after she took over Gan Bei, the pandemic began and so much changed.</p> <p>"The last two years have been difficult," said Chiong-Bisbee.</p> <p>She said it became so difficult that a gate was installed to protect the building. The storefront is still boarded up. Chiong-Bisbee said she doesn't feel comfortable taking the panels down yet.</p> <p>"There is still problems with rampant vandalism and crime," she said.</p> <p>"The hardest part is all of the petty crime, the robbery," said Ma. "You don't know if you are going to be the next one to be targeted."</p> <p>Recently, Seattle police said they brought more resources to one crime hot spot at 12th and Jackson, but it has not fixed all the concerns about crime in the neighborhood. On top of that, the businesses have been battling something else.</p> <p>"There is stigma toward Asians, that we brought the pandemic to the United States, and it is like we have been here forever. We are Asian Americans. We are raised here. We are born here," said Ma.</p> <p>Nationally, between March 2020 and December 2021, there were nearly 11,000 reports of hate incidents against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, according to STOP AAPI HATE.</p> <p>"We are still seeing the lingering effects of that anti-Asian sentiment, at least from what I have been hearing from businesses," said Mike Fong, the regional administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration.</p> <p>During the pandemic, SBA delivered billions in funding to small businesses across the country through loans. Fong said SBA is still here to help.</p>

	<p>"We want to make sure that all these new businesses that we have started relationships with have the opportunity to engage us, and think about other programs and tools that we may be able to offer them," said Fong.</p> <p>Fong said SBA is committed to equitable recovery, and Chiong-Bisbee said she is committed to helping her neighborhood.</p> <p>"You can't replace this neighborhood. If it goes, you can't go back to what it was," she said.</p> <p>That's why she wants the community to be proactive about protecting it.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Economy booming; why worry recession?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/business/economy/recession-economy.html
GIST	<p>Employers are adding hundreds of thousands of jobs a month, and would hire even more people if they could find them. Consumers are spending, businesses are investing, and wages are rising at their fastest pace in decades.</p> <p>So naturally, economists are warning of a possible recession.</p> <p>Rapid inflation, soaring oil prices and global instability have led forecasters to sharply lower their estimates of economic growth this year, and to raise their probabilities of an outright contraction. Investors share that concern: The bond market last week flashed a warning signal that has often — though not always — foreshadowed a downturn.</p> <p>Such predictions may seem confusing when the economy, by many measures, is booming. The United States has regained more than 90 percent of the jobs lost in the early weeks of the pandemic, and employers are continuing to hire at a breakneck pace, adding 431,000 jobs in March alone. The unemployment rate has fallen to 3.6 percent, barely above the prepandemic level, which was itself a half-century low.</p> <p>But to the doomsayers, the recovery's remarkable strength carries the seeds of its own destruction. Demand — for cars, for homes, for restaurant meals and for the workers to provide them — has outstripped supply, leading to the fastest inflation in 40 years. Policymakers at the Federal Reserve argue they can cool off the economy and bring down inflation without driving up unemployment and causing a recession. But many economists are skeptical that the Fed can engineer such a "soft landing," especially in a moment of such extreme global uncertainty.</p> <p>"It's like trying to land during an earthquake," said Tara Sinclair, a professor of economics at George Washington University.</p> <p>William Dudley, a former president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, called a recession "virtually inevitable." He is among the economists arguing that if the Fed had begun raising interest rates last year, it might have been able to rein in inflation merely by tapping the brakes on the economy. Now, they say, the economy is growing so rapidly — and prices are rising so quickly — that the only way for the Fed to get control is to slam on the brakes and cause a recession.</p> <p>Still, a majority of forecasters say a recession remains unlikely in the next year. High oil prices, rising interest rates and waning government aid will all drag down growth this year, said Aneta Markowska, chief economist for Jefferies, an investment bank. But corporate profits are strong, households have trillions in savings, and debt loads are low — all of which should provide a cushion against any slowdown.</p> <p>"It's easy to construct a very negative narrative, but when you actually look at the magnitude of all those impacts, I don't think they're significant enough to push us into a recession in the next 12 months," she</p>

said. Recessions, almost by definition, involve job losses and unemployment; right now, companies are doing practically anything they can to retain workers.

“I just don’t see what would cause businesses to do a complete 180 and go from ‘We need to hire all these people and we can’t find them’ to ‘We have to lay people off,’” Ms. Markowska said.

Economists, however, are notoriously terrible at predicting recessions. So it makes sense to focus instead on where the recovery is right now, and on the forces that are threatening to knock it off course.

Growth will slow. That’s not necessarily a bad thing.

Last year was the best year for economic growth since the mid-1980s, and the best for job growth on record. Those kinds of explosive gains — enabled by vaccines and fueled by trillions of dollars in government aid — were not likely to be repeated this year.

In fact, some slowdown is probably desirable. The rapid rebound in consumer spending, especially on cars, furniture and other goods, has overwhelmed supply chains, driving up prices. Demand for workers is so strong that jobs are going unfilled despite rising wages. Jerome H. Powell, the Fed chair, said recently that the labor market had gotten “tight to an unhealthy level.”

Some economists, particularly on the left, took issue with that claim, arguing that the hot labor market was good for workers. But even most of them said the recent pace of job growth was unsustainable for long.

“We have torn back toward normal at a really fast pace, and it would be unrealistic to think that could continue,” said Josh Bivens, the director of research at the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank. Even slower wage growth, he said, wouldn’t worry him, as long as pay increases didn’t fall further behind inflation.

But some economists cautioned against rooting for a slowdown in a rare moment when low-wage workers were seeing substantial pay increases, and unemployment was falling for vulnerable groups. The unemployment rate among Black Americans fell to 6.2 percent in March, but was still nearly double that of white Americans.

“The recovery from my perspective is fairly robust, and so why not enjoy this right now?” said Michelle Holder, president of the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, a progressive think tank. She said that while economists were right to be concerned about high inflation, “I don’t think similar voices were this bent out of shape about high unemployment.”

A slowdown doesn’t have to mean a recession. (In theory.)

The key question for policymakers is whether they can cool the economy without putting it into deep freeze. Mr. Powell argues that they can, though he acknowledges that it won’t be easy.

His argument goes something like this: There are 11 million open jobs and fewer than six million unemployed workers. There are more would-be home buyers than there are homes to buy, and more would-be car buyers than available cars. By gradually raising interest rates and making it more expensive to borrow, the Fed is hoping to curb demand for workers and homes and cars, but not by so much that employers start cutting jobs.

That is a tricky balance, and historically the Fed has failed to achieve it more often than not. But unlike after the last recession, when the grindingly slow recovery seemed at constant risk of stalling out, the current rebound is fast enough that it could lose substantial momentum without going into reverse. Employers could slash hiring plans, for example, and still have jobs for practically anyone who wanted one.

Some economists also remain hopeful that supply constraints will ease as the pandemic recedes, which would allow inflation to cool without the Fed’s needing to do as much to reduce demand. There are some

signs of that happening: More than 400,000 people rejoined the labor force in March, as falling coronavirus cases and more reliable school schedules allowed more people to return to work.

Aaron Sojourner, an economist at the University of Minnesota, said policymakers shouldn't think of the economy as "overheating" so much as "fevered," its capacity limited by the pandemic.

"When you have a fever, you can't perform at the level that you can perform at when you're healthy, and you break a sweat even when you're doing less than what you used to be able to do," he said. Improvements in the public health crisis, he said, should allow the fever to break.

A lot could go wrong.

For much of last year, Fed officials shared Mr. Sojourner's view, seeing inflation as a result of pandemic-related disruptions that would soon dissipate. When those disruptions proved more persistent than expected, policymakers changed course, but too late to prevent inflation from accelerating beyond what they intended to allow.

The challenge is that central bankers must make decisions before all the data is available.

It is possible, for example, that the imbalances that led to rapid inflation are beginning to dissipate, largely on their own. Federal aid programs created early in the pandemic have mostly ended, and many families have drawn down their savings. That could bring down demand just as supply is starting to catch up. In that scenario, the Fed could short-circuit the recovery if it acts too aggressively.

But it is also possible that strong job growth and rising wages will keep consumer demand high, while supply-chain disruptions and labor shortages linger. In that case, if the Fed is too cautious, it runs the risk of letting inflation spiral further out of control. The last time that happened, the Fed under Paul A. Volcker had to induce a crippling recession in the early 1980s to bring inflation to heel.

Mr. Powell has argued it is not too late to prevent such a "hard landing." But even if a recession is inevitable, it isn't likely to happen overnight.

"I don't think we're going to go into a recession in the next 12 months," said Megan Greene, a senior fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School and global chief economist for the Kroll Institute. "I think it's possible in the 12 months after that."

Global turmoil makes everything more complicated.

When this year began, forecasters pegged February or March as the moment when major inflation indexes would hit their peak and begin to fall. But the war in Ukraine, and the resulting spike in oil prices, dashed those hopes. The year-over-year rate of inflation hit a 40-year high in February, and almost certainly accelerated further in March as gas prices topped \$4 a gallon in much of the country.

The pandemic itself also remains a wild card. China in recent weeks has imposed strict lockdowns in parts of the country in an effort to stop the spread of coronavirus cases there, and a new subvariant has led to a rise in cases in Europe. That could prolong supply-chain disruptions globally, even if the United States itself avoided another coronavirus wave.

"The biggest unknown is global supply chains and how we manage all of those because it's contingent on Chinese Covid policy and a war in Europe," Ms. Greene said.

There is little sign so far that rising gas prices, stock market volatility or fear of Covid has damped consumers' willingness to spend, or businesses' willingness to hire. But those factors are adding to uncertainty, making it harder for policymakers to discern where the economy is headed, and to decide how to react.

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/business/europe-exports-russia.html
GIST	<p>PARIS — The shoes, 600 pairs in all, lay untouched inside an Italian warehouse: magenta sandals, décolleté heels and gold ballerina flats, destined for Russian boutiques but stuck in a limbo of sanctions and economic upheaval from Russia’s war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Sergio Amaranti, the Italian shoe company saddled with the mountain of unpaid merchandise, is among thousands of European businesses grappling with a widening blowback from the conflict.</p> <p>“It’s scary,” said Moira Amaranti, who manages the company founded by her father and uncle. She said she worried that the sudden financial loss could destabilize the 47-year-old firm, which sustains her 20 longtime workers and their families. “Russia is half of our business,” she said. “And now we have a problem.”</p> <p>Russia’s monthlong war on Ukraine is lashing Europe’s economic rebound from the Covid-19 pandemic, threatening its job-rich recovery. Manufacturers and retailers that were benefiting from renewed growth are adjusting to wild swings in business conditions that have injected fresh uncertainty into economic decision-making.</p> <p>Sanctions intended to punish Moscow for its invasion are blowing back to companies in unexpected ways, undermining confidence and their ability to plan. Small firms like Sergio Amaranti face a hazy future as exports to one of its key markets grind to a halt. Large multinationals that have been pulling back from Russia are assessing the risk of asset seizures or nationalization.</p> <p>The war’s reverberations on surging energy, food and commodity prices are causing even wider problems, forcing European turbine makers, glass factories and zinc plants to slow or pause production. Growing congestion in logistics and supply chains has added to inflationary pressures, prompting retailers to pass rising costs onto consumers and find alternative supplies. Annual inflation hit a 40-year high of 7.5 percent in Europe last month.</p> <p>As the disruptions pressure European businesses and their workers, governments in France, Spain and neighboring countries are redirecting spending priorities and pledging huge subsidies to offset the pain, on top of hundreds of billions already spent to keep them afloat during the pandemic.</p> <p>The European Commission authorized companies affected by sanctions against Russia to receive up to €400,000 (\$441,000) in state aid. European businesses and consumers are getting government rebates at the gas pump and in their energy bills.</p> <p>“The longer the war lasts, the higher the economic costs will be and the greater the likelihood we end up in more adverse scenarios,” Christine Lagarde, the European Central Bank chief, warned on Wednesday. On the same day, Germany, Europe’s largest economy, slashed its forecast for growth in 2022 by more than half, to 1.8 percent.</p> <p>Cogemacoustic, a family-run enterprise employing 50 people in Limoges, in southwest-central France, never expected a war would have an impact on it. The company, which specializes in mammoth industrial fans used in tunnels and mines, secured contracts for the first time in Russia last summer to help make up for a slowdown in business from pandemic lockdowns, said Marion Oriez, the chief executive.</p> <p>Russian sales quickly ramped up to 5 percent of the business, and were expected to double this year — until Russia invaded Ukraine. Russian customers were unable to pay €90 million owed for delivered fans because of sanctions on Russian banks, Ms. Oriez said. An additional 20 fans, about the size of small trucks, destined for Russia are sitting on her factory floor — a sunk cost of €350,000.</p> <p>The company was already grappling with supply shortages and rising commodity and energy costs when the war cut off steel from Ukraine needed to make the fans, requiring Ms. Oriez to find new sources and slowing factory production.</p>

“Our situation is still difficult,” Ms. Oriez said. “There’s a lot of uncertainty for the enterprise.”

At Sergio Amaranti, based in the town of Civitanova Marche among a large cluster of other shoemakers with long ties to the Russian market, managers have faced tough decisions about whether to keep producing despite lost orders.

Ms. Amaranti said she had gathered with her family and workers to decide whether to stop making 500 more pairs of summer shoes that retailers in Russia had ordered. It would probably be impossible to deliver them anytime soon, and seven big Russian orders had already been canceled.

In the end, though, they decided to go ahead with the production, because they had already bought the leather and soles.

“I am very worried,” said Ms. Amaranti, whose priority is to find solutions that will keep her workers paid. “A business owner bears the weight of many families.”

For the [Eichbaum](#) brewery in Mannheim, Germany, losing its Russian export market was only the beginning of the problems wrought by the war.

Germany’s third-biggest exporter of beer, the company had already suffered from two years of crippled sales as the pandemic shuttered bars and canceled festivals, as well as from tangles in its supply chain. Now the price of hops and other grains used in brewing have more than doubled, driven by fears of shortages linked to the expected loss of this year’s crops from Ukraine, known as Europe’s breadbasket, said Uwe Aichele, who is responsible for the brewery’s international sales.

Those problems have been compounded by a lack of aluminum cans and glass bottles — both produced in Ukraine — along with the high price of energy that is plaguing Germany.

“The longer this goes on, the worse it will get,” Mr. Aichele said.

Retailers have to seek out less desirable replacements for commodities that are suddenly in short supply, upsetting customers. A British company, Iceland, is among numerous grocery chains in Europe facing a shortage of sunflower oil from Ukraine, which together with Russia accounts for 70 percent of the global supply.

Iceland has had to start using palm oil again to make various food products, after cutting it out to fulfill environmental sustainability pledges, the managing director, Richard Walker, said in a message to customers on Iceland’s website.

Mercadona, Spain’s largest supermarket operator, introduced a limit of five liters of sunflower oil per consumer. At San Ginés, a century-old cafe in Madrid famous for its churros, a crispy dough fried in sunflower oil, Pablo Sánchez, the manager, said he might have to pass on a 20 percent price rise to consumers.

“We’ve just come out of the nightmare of the pandemic and now we’re facing this war, so these are really times when you need to show extreme resilience to survive as a business,” he said.

At Vetropack, a Swiss maker of glass storage containers with plants throughout Europe, the chief executive, Johann Reiter, is bracing for the possibility that Russia’s aggression may go beyond Ukraine.

Nearly 600 workers at the company’s plant near Kyiv were forced to suddenly stop production when Russian tanks invaded the country. Around 300 tons of molten glass was left to solidify inside the site’s furnace, rendering it useless.

The Ukrainian plant made 700 million beer bottles, jam jars and other containers last year, and without it, Vetropack’s revenue is expected to slump 10 percent. The company can’t make up for the lost production

	<p>because its other factories are working at capacity, so managers are studying whether to change its mix of products.</p> <p>Mr. Reiter is keeping a wary eye on neighboring Moldova, where another Vetropack factory operates. The company is preparing for a worst-case scenario in which Russia extends war there, putting evacuation and shutdown plans in place, as well as backup generators and satellite phones for managers to maintain communication.</p> <p>“It is probably the most difficult period of my time as C.E.O.,” Mr. Reiter said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Pentagon: world trending greater instability
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/5/world-trending-toward-greater-instability-pentagon/
GIST	<p>Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is the latest indication that the world is rapidly becoming more unstable, top Pentagon leaders said Tuesday, as they warned that the prospects of major conflict between the U.S. and other great powers such as China and Russia are increasing.</p> <p>In testimony before a House panel, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark A. Milley said that he believes Russia’s unprovoked attack on its neighbor Ukraine isn’t an isolated event. He offered a grim warning about the future of a democratic world order that is now facing its greatest threat in decades.</p> <p>“Currently, we are supporting our European allies and guarding NATO’s eastern flank in the face of the unnecessary war of aggression by Russia against the people of Ukraine and the assault on the democratic institutions and the rules-based international order that have prevented great power war for the last 78 years, since the end of World War II,” Gen. Milley told the House Armed Services Committee.</p> <p>“We are now facing two global powers, China and Russia, each with significant military capabilities, both who intend to fundamentally change the rules-based current global order,” he said. “We are entering a world that is becoming more unstable, and the potential for significant international conflict between great powers is increasing, not decreasing.”</p> <p>“The Russian invasion of Ukraine is threatening to undermine not only European peace and stability, but global peace and stability that my parents and a generation of Americans fought so hard to defend,” Gen. Milley added.</p> <p>Tuesday’s budget hearing was the first time the Pentagon’s top uniformed officer had testified extensively on Capitol Hill since the Russian invasion Feb. 24.</p> <p>Lawmakers pressed the Defense Department leaders on not only Russia’s aggression toward Ukraine but also the potential for a Chinese attack on Taiwan, which China’s Communist leaders consider to be a breakaway territory.</p> <p>Taken together, Gen. Austin and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin made clear they believe that the threats posed by Russia and China mean the likelihood of major war is increasing.</p> <p>“We’re trending toward greater instability,” Mr. Austin said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 ICE to track down AWOL illegal immigrants
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/5/ice-to-scour-us-communities-looking-for-border-abs/
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security will deploy teams of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers into communities to track down illegal immigrants the Biden administration caught and released at the border last year and who have since gone AWOL, The Washington Times has learned.</p>

Some fugitive operations teams at ICE, who had been used to go after serious criminals, will be sent after the border jumpers, according to a memo detailing the new policy, known as “Operation Notice to Report Plus.”

But ICE officers doubt the chances of success, saying they have little hope of tracking down people who gave bad addresses to the government and haven’t built enough of a digital footprint to be found otherwise.

“We’re literally looking for ghosts,” one ICE source said. “This whole thing’s crazy.”

The assignment is particularly aggravating for ICE officers who feel they’re being tasked to play clean-up for the administration’s bungling.

The targets of the operation were caught by the Border Patrol last year and were in custody. But they were released without being given an immigration court summons and have ignored follow-up efforts to reach them.

“Part of me wonders whether this is meant to be effective, or if it’s largely a messaging exercise meant to persuade the public and the courts that this administration takes the laws seriously. I guess time will tell,” said Jon Feere, former chief of staff at ICE in the Trump administration.

ICE, in a statement to The Times, wouldn’t comment on the operation, calling it a “law enforcement sensitive” matter that conforms to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas’ priorities of “national security, public safety and border security” cases.

The new operation comes even as the administration prepares for another surge of migrants this spring that could obliterate last year’s record-shattering numbers.

During the worst of the 2021 surge, Border Patrol agents were so overwhelmed that they didn’t have time to process and issue a Notice to Appear (NTA), the official immigration court summons, to all of the people they were catching and releasing. Instead, they issued a Notice to Report (NTR), which took about 10 minutes, or far less than the hour it takes to issue an NTA.

The difference is more than just the name of the form.

An NTA enters a migrant into deportation proceedings, and they can be ordered removed by an immigration judge if they don’t show up for their hearings.

Those given NTRs are not officially in deportation court proceedings. Instead, an NTR asks them to check in with an ICE office within 60 days and, in some cases, to collect an NTA.

Tens of thousands have failed to do so.

ICE wouldn’t talk numbers with The Times, but in communications to Congress, Mr. Mayorkas revealed that from late March to the end of July, 104,171 illegal immigrants were caught and released with NTRs. Of those, 97,564 were beyond the 60-day window and 47,705 had failed to check in.

That works out to 49% who hadn’t checked in after 60 days, or substantially worse than the 25% refusal rate Mr. Mayorkas had claimed in testimony to the Senate in September.

Faced with the grim numbers, ICE late last year launched Operation Horizon, which fired off warning letters to the resisters begging them to come in and get their NTAs. The letters promised migrants they wouldn’t be detained, barring major criminal issues with their records.

Thousands of those summonses didn’t produce results, prompting the latest operation.

“It’s clear that the Notice to Report and Parole/Alternatives to Detention processes have failed. This is nothing more than catch-and-release by another name,” said Sen. James Lankford, an Oklahoma Republican who has been closely tracking the border situation.

“The only real solution to address border security is to enforce the law, which Biden’s team is clearly unwilling to do,” the senator told The Times.

NTRs unite both sides of the immigration debate.

Immigrant-rights advocates say they create all sorts of problems for the migrants, who have to go through extra hoops to figure out the immigration process they face.

“People who are given NTRs at a moment of what is crisis in their own lives are frankly set up for failure,” said Jorge Loweree, policy director at the American Immigration Council.

He said it’s incumbent on Homeland Security to get NTAs into the hands of everyone who was released on an NTR to give them an opportunity to present their case.

“If the government’s going to force you or me to go through a legal process with potentially serious legal consequences for us, the government needs to meet its burden and make sure we received the proper paperwork,” he said. “If the government can’t do that for a specific reason the government needs to figure out a way to make that right.”

According to the memo laying out the new operation, migrants with “criminal histories” will take top priority as officers decide who to target.

Officers were instructed to keep the operation “low profile in nature” because many of the targets will be families. They were told to wear plain clothes rather than uniforms, to keep body armor under their clothes, and to use unmarked vehicles.

Officers were given permission to arrest and detain migrants they thought were security or safety risks, and were also told they could bring some criminal cases to federal prosecutors.

But officers were specifically told they should not arrest other illegal immigrants they happen to come across as they’re tracking down the border fugitives.

“The approval to carry out an enforcement action against targeted noncitizens will not authorize enforcement actions against other noncitizens encountered during the operation,” the memo said.

The operation was scheduled to start April 1 and run through June 30.

One source said there are more than 3,600 initial targets, but officers are expecting more people to be added to the list during the 90 days.

ICE’s National Criminal Analysis and Targeting Center has been tasked with trying to develop leads to track down targets for the operation. Officers say they’re not expecting much.

The targets generally have no footprint beyond the addresses they gave, and those have already proved to be invalid. They haven’t been in the country long enough to generate other data, such as utility bills or car registration data, that could help the targeting center track them down.

“It’s a complete waste of time and resources that Mayorkas claims we already don’t have enough of,” said a second ICE source.

That source said even if the targets can be tracked down and pressured to go through their court proceedings, the administration might still just close their cases, giving them a free pass.

	<p>“That or they become the next protected class like the DACA aliens,” the source said, referring to the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which for a decade has offered a deportation amnesty to “Dreamers,” immigrants who came to the U.S. illegally as children.</p> <p>Also complicating plans is Mr. Mayorkas’ rules limiting places where ICE officers can operate. He has generally barred enforcement actions near what he has deemed “protected” locations — schools, day cares, parks, clinics, bus stops and organizations that provide social services.</p> <p>That places many urban areas off-limits, leaving officers wondering how they’re supposed to track down and serve NTAs to people who live near one of the protected areas.</p> <p>Mr. Feere said if Mr. Mayorkas is serious about wanting the operation to succeed, he should waive his rules.</p> <p>“And then the question becomes what happens if they do locate some of these individuals,” he said. “Are they actually going to be deported? Are they going to be detained?”</p> <p>He said the issue of absconders will outlast the Biden administration.</p> <p>“It’s important for the GOP to really think about the resources ICE is going to need in the coming years to clean up the mess created by this administration,” said Mr. Feere, who is now director of investigations at the Center for Immigration Studies.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Shanghai Covid outbreak ‘extremely grim’
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/5/covid-outbreak-extremely-grim-as-shanghai-extends-/
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — The COVID-19 outbreak in China’s largest metropolis of Shanghai remains “extremely grim” amid an ongoing lockdown confining around 26 million people to their homes, a city official said Tuesday.</p> <p>Director of Shanghai’s working group on epidemic control, Gu Honghui, was quoted by state media as saying that the outbreak in the city was “still running at a high level.”</p> <p>“The situation is extremely grim,” Gu said.</p> <p>China has sent more than 10,000 health workers from around the country to aid the city, including 2,000 from the military, and is mass testing residents, some of whom have been locked down for weeks.</p> <p>Most of eastern Shanghai, which was supposed to reopen last Friday, remained locked down along with the western half of the city.</p> <p>Officials would reevaluate preventative measures after the results of tests on all city residents are analyzed, Gu said.</p> <p>“Before that, citizens are asked to continue following the current lockdown measures and stay in their homes except for medical and other emergency situations,” Gu said.</p> <p>Shanghai has reported more than 73,000 positive COVID-19 infections since the resurgence of the highly contagious Omicron variant in March.</p> <p>Shanghai recorded another 13,354 cases on Monday - the vast majority of them asymptomatic - bringing the city’s total to more than 73,000 since the latest wave of infections began last month. No deaths have been ascribed to the outbreak driven by the omicron BA.2 variant, which is much more infectious but also less lethal than the previous delta strain.</p>

A separate outbreak continues to rage in the northeastern province of Jilin and the capital Beijing also saw an additional nine cases, just one of them asymptomatic. Workers shut down an entire shopping center in the city where a case had been detected.

While China's vaccination rate hovers around 90%, its domestically produced inactivated virus vaccines are seen as weaker than the mRNA vaccines such as those produced by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna that are used abroad, as well as in the Chinese territories of Hong Kong and Macao. Vaccination rates among the elderly are also much lower than the population at large, with only around half of those over 80 fully vaccinated.

Meanwhile, complaints have arisen in Shanghai over difficulties obtaining food and daily necessities, and shortages of medical workers, volunteers and beds in isolation wards where tens of thousands are being kept for observation.

Shanghai has converted an exhibition hall and other facilities into massive isolation centers where people with mild or no symptoms are housed in a sea of beds separated by temporary partitions.

Gu said about 47,700 beds are available for COVID-19 patients, with another 30,000 beds to be ready soon. It wasn't clear how many beds were available for patients placed under observation, who number more than 100,000 according to city health authorities.

Public outrage has been fueled by reports and video clips posted on the internet documenting the death of a nurse who was denied admittance to her own hospital under COVID-19 restrictions, and infant children separated from their parents.

Circulation of footage showing multiple infants kept in cots prompted the city's Public Health Clinical Center to issue a statement saying the children were being well looked after and had been in the process of being moved to a new facility when the footage was taken.

At a virtual town hall Monday, the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai warned of possible family separations amid the lockdown, but said it had an "extremely limited ability" to intervene in such cases.

Concern is growing about the potential economic impact on China's financial capital, also a major shipping and manufacturing center. Most public transport has been suspended and non-essential businesses closed, although airports and train stations remain open and the city's port and some major industries such as car plants continue to operate.

International events in the city have been canceled and three out of five foreign companies with operations in Shanghai say they have cut this year's sales forecasts, according to a survey conducted last week by the American Chamber of Commerce. One-third of the 120 companies that responded to the survey said they have delayed investments.

Despite those concerns and growing public frustration, China says it is sticking to its hardline "zero-tolerance" approach mandating lockdowns, mass testing and the compulsory isolation of all suspected cases and close contacts.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Expelled Russia diplomats: more than 250
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/05/eu-allies-expel-over-120-russian-diplomats-in-two-days-after-bucha-killings
GIST	Scores of Russian diplomats have been expelled from European countries this week in a direct expression of governments' outrage at the killings of Ukrainian civilians revealed as Moscow's military forces left.

In what amounts to one of the biggest diplomatic breakdowns of recent years, 149 Russian diplomats have been told since Monday they are no longer welcome to stay by governments in Italy, France, Germany and elsewhere, in addition to more than 100 reported to have already been thrown out since the beginning of Russia's latest invasion of Ukraine on 24 February.

It brings the total of expelled Russian diplomats and embassy workers to more than 250, with more expected to follow.

In Germany, where Annalena Baerbock, the foreign minister, said on Monday that 40 Russian embassy employees must leave, intelligence sources said the diplomats were seen as a direct threat to Ukrainians living in Germany.

The expulsions were described as an immediate response to the murder of civilians in the town of Bucha, north of Kyiv, which the German government has described as war crimes. Ukrainian officials have said the bodies of 410 civilians were recovered from towns in the Kyiv area when Russian troops withdrew.

"The government has today decided to declare a substantial number of people connected to the Russian embassy persona non grata, who have been working here in Germany on a daily basis against our freedom, against the cohesion of our society," Baerbock said.

Ahead of her announcement, Andreas Michaelis, the state secretary in the foreign ministry, summoned the Russian ambassador, Sergei Nechaev, to inform him that the named persons had five days in which to pack up their possessions and leave Germany.

German intelligence sources have informed media in Germany that those due to be expelled include people who "pose a concrete threat" to Ukrainian activists based in Germany, as well as to the approximately 307,000 Ukrainian refugees who have arrived since war broke out.

Baerbock said Michaelis had spoken to Nechaev about the specific threats. "We will no longer tolerate this. This is what we told the Russian ambassador this afternoon," she added.

Intelligence sources have said they believe there are as many as 2,000 suspected Russian spies operating in Germany.

On Tuesday afternoon Spain became the latest country to announce expulsions, saying 25 diplomats and embassy staff would have to leave.

"The unbearable images we have seen of the massacre of civilians in the town of Bucha after the withdrawal of the Russian army deeply outrage us," the foreign minister, José Manuel Albares, said after a weekly cabinet meeting. He said the diplomats and staff posed a "threat to the interest of the country" and would be expelled immediately.

Italy earlier said it was expelling 30 diplomats, for what its foreign minister, Luigi Di Maio, called "national security reasons". He said his ministry had summoned Russia's ambassador to Italy, Sergey Razov, to inform him of the Italian government's decision, telling him the people on the list had been designated as unwelcome.

France on Monday expelled 35 diplomats, calling it part of a joint European action, and describing the activities of those persons pinpointed for removal as "against our security interests".

Lithuania's foreign minister, Gabrielius Landsbergis, the same day said that as an expression of Lithuania's "full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people" it would be expelling the Russian ambassador. Its own ambassador to Russia would also return to Vilnius in the near future, he said.

Sweden's foreign ministry is to expel three Russian diplomats it said had carried out "illegal operations", while Denmark said 15 Russian intelligence officers it accused directly of spying would be forced to leave

within 14 days. The Danish foreign ministry said it would stop short of expelling the ambassador as it did not wish to completely cut diplomatic ties with Moscow.

Numerous Russian diplomats were expelled from the US, the Netherlands, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Ireland and Belgium last week.

In turn Russia has so far said it will expel a handful of diplomats from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, though many more are expected to follow.

On Tuesday, Russia's deputy foreign minister, Alexander Grushko, said the expulsions were part of a "pre-coordinated campaign", adding that they were counterproductive and would have a long-lasting effect.

"This is a blow to bilateral relations, to the channels of diplomatic discussions," he said. Russia he added, would take "retaliatory measures".

On Monday, Russia's former president and the deputy head of its security council, Dmitry Medvedev, said the expulsions amounted to self-punishment by the countries who had called for them.

Medvedev said on his Telegram channel that Moscow's response would be "symmetrical and destructive for bilateral relations. Who have they punished? First and foremost, themselves."

He said although the move would save money, it would mean countries would end up facing each other "to attack, with weapons".

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HEADLINE	04/06 Sanctions: Netherlands seizes 14 yachts
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-ukraine-netherlands-seizes-yachts-putin-regime-faces-more-sanctions/
GIST	<p><i>The Hague</i> — Dutch customs authorities have impounded 14 yachts in shipyards, including 12 still under construction, as part of still-growing Western sanctions imposed over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the government said Wednesday. European and U.S. authorities have seized several yachts with links to Russian tycoons under the unprecedented sanctions that followed the February 24 invasion.</p> <p>"Given the current measures, these vessels cannot be delivered, transferred or exported for the moment," Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra wrote in a letter to the Dutch parliament.</p> <p>The 12 yachts under construction, which include luxury vessels more than 38 yards long, were being built in five different shipyards for "Russian beneficiaries," the government said. The other two yachts are currently undergoing maintenance.</p> <p>"These are not people who figure on the European sanctions lists," the Dutch minister said. The "ownership" of the yachts was being investigated further, however, including whether one of them was connected to a person on the European sanctions list, Hoekstra said.</p> <p>"The government attaches great importance to the respect and implementation of sanctions," he added.</p> <p>The Netherlands has also frozen 516 million euros' worth of assets and 155 million euros in transactions, the minister said.</p> <p>The U.S. was poised to announce a new sanctions package against Russia on Wednesday in response to reported atrocities around Ukraine's capital of Kyiv, sources familiar with the forthcoming penalties confirmed to CBS News this week.</p>

	<p>The additional sanctions were to be announced in coordination with the Group of 7 and European Union, and were designed to impose "significant costs" on Russia for its brutalities in Ukraine, the sources said.</p> <p>The measures will include a ban on all new investment in Russia, increased sanctions on financial institutions and state-owned enterprises, and sanctions on Russian government officials and members of their families.</p> <p>The measures are intended to "degrade key instruments on Russian state power" and impose swift economic harm on Russia, according to the sources.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Covid disproportionate impact on poor
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/covid-19-devastating-disproportionate-impact-poorest-americans-report/story?id=83893515
GIST	<p>As the nation approaches the grim milestone of 1 million lives confirmed lost to COVID-19, a new report reveals the "devastating and disproportionate" impact of the virus on low-income communities in the U.S., offering an initial analysis of the deadly consequences of poverty, economic insecurity and systemic racism.</p> <p>"Poverty was not tangential to the pandemic, but deeply embedded in its geography," researchers wrote. "Poverty and widespread inequality increases vulnerability to crises. While vaccines will prevent the worst impacts of COVID-19, they will not inoculate against poverty."</p> <p>The report, produced by the The Poor People's Campaign in collaboration with the U.N. Sustainable Development Solutions Network, found that death rates in the lowest income group were double the death rates of those in the highest income group.</p> <p>In addition, counties with disproportionately more Black residents had a significantly higher COVID-19 death rate than counties that did not.</p> <p>The pandemic exacerbated preexisting social and economic disparities that existed prior to the emergence of COVID-19, the report found.</p> <p>"Crises do not unfold independently of the conditions from which they arise," researchers said. "The pandemic exacerbated preexisting social and economic disparities that have long festered in the US, including a deeply divided society, widespread poverty, a weak social safety net, inadequate living conditions, and a lack of trust in science that predated COVID-19."</p> <p>Prior to the onset of the pandemic, there were 140 million low-income people living in the U.S., accounting for approximately 40% of the population -- including more than half of children in the country.</p> <p>"Widespread and unequal distribution of wealth, income and resources prior to the pandemic created the conditions for many of the negative outcomes associated with the virus," researchers wrote.</p> <p>Death rates have varied throughout the pandemic, in each of the various surges. Researchers found that the two deadliest waves were the winter surge of 2020-2021, accounting for nearly 40% of all deaths to date, and the recent omicron surge, accounting for nearly 20% of deaths so far, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.</p> <p>With the exception of the first COVID-19 surge, U.S. counties with the "lowest median income had death rates at least two times higher than that of the counties with the highest income."</p> <p>Preexisting disparities in health care access, wealth distribution and housing insecurity created "disastrous effects" for some Americans, as the virus exacerbated gaps in access that "caused increased harm to populations based on their class, race, gender, geography, and ability."</p>

	<p>Findings also suggested that pandemic job losses were concentrated among low-income workers, and that Americans living in poverty were the most likely to miss work due to COVID-19. Furthermore, Black and Hispanic women were most likely to lose full-time jobs.</p> <p>Researchers stressed that adequate living wages, shared economic prosperity and inclusive welfare programs can address some of the concerns discussed in the report. In addition, ensuring universal and affordable health care, housing, water, access to utilities, quality public education and guaranteeing a robust democracy "will establish a more equitable foundation upon which we can build back better from the pandemic."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Treasury bars Russia payments in dollars
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/treasury-bars-russia-payments-dollars-us-accounts-83884026
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- The Treasury Department is moving to keep the Russian government from making debt payments at U.S. banks with U.S. dollars, restricting one of the strategies President Vladimir Putin is using to stave off default, an agency official said Tuesday.</p> <p>Russia faces several April deadlines to make debt payments. The Kremlin must now choose between draining its remaining valuable dollar reserves, using new revenue coming in or default, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the official wasn't authorized to speak on the record.</p> <p>The Treasury decision comes after the agency previously said sanctions levied on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine still permit Russia to continue to make debt payments. The debt is owed to foreign investors, among others, and comes from government investments to presumably spur economic growth in Russia.</p> <p>Russia is currently facing skyrocketing inflation, shortages in essential goods and disrupted trade with the rest of the world as it continues its invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>While the ruble has bounced back from the fall it took after the U.S. and European allies moved to bury the Russian economy, Putin has resorted to extreme financial measures to blunt the West's penalties and inflate his currency.</p> <p>Western sanctions from the war have placed severe restrictions on banks and their financial transactions with Russia, and also have frozen much of the government's reserves of foreign currency.</p> <p>The West has cut key Russian banks out of a financial messaging system known as SWIFT, which is used every day to route billions of dollars among more than 11,000 banks and other financial institutions around the world. Sanctions have been issued on Russian leadership, oligarchs, trade and natural resources, and the country's central bank.</p> <p>The U.S., EU and United Kingdom have limited the ability of Russia's central bank to draw on more than \$600 billion in foreign currency reserves and have frozen its gold reserves. That has left the central bank with few tools to prop up the ruble and prevent it from crumbling in value.</p> <p>The decision to limit bond payments will further deplete the resources Putin is using to continue his war against Ukraine and will cause more uncertainty and challenges for Russia's financial system, the Treasury official said.</p> <p>Darshak Dholakia, a trade and government regulations attorney in Washington, said now that Treasury has restricted access to these funds, "it seems like the calculus has changed."</p> <p>He said the U.S. is finding ways to ensure that Russia has less money to buy weapons by reducing its access to funds to pay for its bond obligations.</p>

	<p>“The U.S. has not put full blocking measures on the central bank yet,” he said. “They're saying that Russia can't touch those funds unless it's for an authorized purpose.”</p> <p>Once a country defaults, it can be cut off from bond-market borrowing until the default is sorted out and investors regain confidence in the government's ability and willingness to pay. Additionally, holders of the bonds could take serious losses and can sue.</p> <p>Russia's government can still borrow rubles at home, where it mostly relies on Russian banks to buy its bonds.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	04/05 Anonymous vows 'unprecedented attack'
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/anonymous-vows-unprecedented-attack-in-retaliation-for-bucha-crimes-on-russia-companies-operating-there/
GIST	<p>Anonymous hackers who have been targeting Russia since the invasion of Ukraine reported more strikes against critical infrastructure sectors — including one using an “improved” iteration of Russian Conti ransomware — and called for the targeting of companies that “have blood on their hands” for continuing to do business in Russia after the massacre of Ukrainian civilians in Bucha.</p> <p>Human Rights Watch said it has documented cases of “unspeakable, deliberate cruelty and violence against Ukrainian civilians,” including summary executions and rape as well as looting by Russian soldiers. Russia's claim that “not a single local resident has suffered from any violent action” in Bucha, where bodies lay in the streets, has been disproven by satellite imagery.</p> <p>“What other evidence is needed for those multinational companies which are still doing bloody business in Russia? If it's difficult for you to leave Russia immediately even after the #BuchaMassacre, then it will be easy for us to involve you in the #OpRussia campaign,” tweeted one prominent Anonymous account, scrolling a list of companies along with details on how they are still involved in Russia.</p> <p>“Almost 500 Companies Have Withdrawn from Russia—But Some Remain. Who are the companies that remain(start tagging them, yes it's a group activity). Let's get their attention and make they know we are coming for them,” tweeted another Anonymous account.</p> <p>On Monday, DDoSecrets published more than 20 years of data swiped from VGTRK (All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company) in what DDoSecrets co-founder Emma Best called “an unprecedented exposure of state-owned media and propaganda, which the Russian government considers essential to the state security.”</p> <p>The leak came from Anonymous-affiliated hackers NB65 and amounted to 786.2 GB worth of data, including more than 900,000 emails and more than 4,000 files from VGTRK's cloud service.</p> <p>“If those of us in the west are lucky, we might even recognize some patterns and techniques used in our own propaganda machines,” Best stated, stressing that Russia “has never really been a target like this before” for hackers but “many more people are driven by outrage” after Russia invaded Ukraine and are willing to take the risk of retaliatory action. “Frankly, we've never seen this much data out of Russia before. The post-invasion Russian leaks easily outweigh all the pre-invasion Russian leaks.”</p> <p>NB65 vowed “the leaks will continue” until Russia ceases all activity in Ukraine, and announced Sunday that they hacked SSK Gazregion LLC, which specializes in the construction of main gas pipelines, compressor stations, and gas distribution facilities.</p>

NB65 said last week that they hacked JSC (Joint Stock Company) Mosexpertiza. “We’ve compromised your network environment completely,” NB65 said in an open message to JSC Mosexpertiza. “Not sorry. By now it’s probably painfully apparent that you’ve also been infected by a crypto locking ransomware variant. Spoiler, it’s Conti’s.”

Early in the #OpRussia campaign, hackers went after the pro-Russia Conti ransomware group, leaking internal chats and files from the group. That offensive action may have been what prompted an update on the Conti threat from DHS’ Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, warning stakeholders that “Conti cyber threat actors remain active” and the group is targeting U.S. and international organizations.

In their message to SSK Gazregion LLC, NB65 declared that they had “improved Conti’s ransomware even more.”

“It’s now ripping through your environment rendering those files useless,” the group said. “Normally your IT team would probably restore from back ups. Don’t worry about that. We deleted all of them.” The company was directed to follow instructions in a text file. “While we have very little sympathy (none at all actually) for your current situation we will honor our word to provide decryption if you decide you want that data back. We’ve also taken 110GB of your data in the form of emails, financials... the usual shit we take.”

Anon Zeus also announced leaks of banking details from the JSC NNK-Khabarovsk Oil Refinery and Omsk Fuel Company. “As always it’s been a pleasure defending the amazing UKRAINIAN PEOPLE,” the account tweeted.

“Genocide is unforgivable and deserves extreme punishment,” said a video posted by Anon Zeus, noting that a March 24-30 survey showing 83 percent approval for President Vladimir Putin meant that Russian people who have “cold-heartedly sided” with Putin and his “evil regime” are “now the enemy.”

“Which now means that Anonymous are coming for your means of survivability,” the video continued. “We will attack your internet exchanges, your payment systems, water supplies, your gas supplies, and your electricity grid. We will also take full control of your satellite systems, nuclear plants, and we will render you useless. It is now time that you feel the full brunt of the West’s cyber capabilities.”

“Any company or country seen supporting Russia and Putin will become a target,” the video added.

Anonymous accounts circulated a list released Monday by the Ukraine Defense Ministry’s Intelligence Directorate that contained names, ranks and passport details of Russians who served in the 64 Motor Rifle Brigade that occupied Bucha last month. “Remember! All war criminals will be brought to justice for crimes committed against the civilian population of Ukraine,” the directorate declared.

“#OpRussia ! We call upon the global #Anonymous collective for another almighty attack on #russia – the atrocities in #Bucha cannot go unpunished ! Dear Vladimir Putin do you expect this to go unpunished? We think NOT ! Expect Us !” tweeted an Anonymous account, adding, “We call on all the #Anonymous collective to target International companies who still continue to conduct and engage in business with #russia !”

“#Anonymous does not forgive and does not forget. The brutality against civilians in #Bucha cannot be forgiven and will not be forgotten,” another Anonymous account tweeted. “Brothers and sisters the time is now to push forward with an unprecedented attack on Putin and his war criminals until justice is the peoples.”

Squad303, who created the 1920.in tool for anybody to send random Russians text, email, and WhatsApp messages communicating the truth about Vladimir Putin’s aggression, tweeted a photo of a Bucha victim zeroed in on the hands bound behind his back. “We cannot remain silent,” the group tweeted. “We must shout.”

	“That’s the reason why we can’t stop... You can’t stop... We must do everything we can to make the murderer Putin pay for this!”
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HEADLINE	04/05 Cyber Command aids Ukraine networks
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/cyber-command-chief-u-s-has-stepped-up-to-protect-ukraines-networks/
GIST	<p>U.S. Cyber Command chief Gen. Paul Nakasone said Tuesday that his organization has “stepped up” its efforts to strengthen Ukraine’s networks and cyber defenses against Russian digital attacks since Moscow began its invasion in February.</p> <p>“We provided remote analytic support to Ukraine and conducted network defense activities aligned to critical networks from outside Ukraine — directly in support of mission partners,” Nakasone, who also leads the NSA, said in written testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee.</p> <p>The command also increased the number of “hunt forward teams” sent to Eastern Europe to uncover potential network vulnerabilities — a step Nakasone mentioned in testimony last month before the Senate Intelligence Committee — including in the run-up to the assault when Cyber Command deployed a group “who sat side-by-side with our partners to gain critical insights that have increased homeland defense for both the United States and Ukraine,” according to Nakasone.</p> <p>“These operations have bolstered the resilience of Ukraine and our NATO Allies and partners.”</p> <p>The command also provided intelligence before Moscow launched its assault, warned U.S. critical infrastructure entities to “tighten” their network defenses and “accelerated efforts against criminal cyber enterprises,” he said.</p> <p>Nakasone warned the “current crisis is not over” as Russian military and intelligence services are utilizing a “range of cyber capabilities,” including to support Moscow’s invasion and defend its actions via a global propaganda campaign.</p> <p>The testimony comes as U.S. and world leaders grow anxious that Russia might unleash its sprawling hacker army against Ukraine as the conflict has entered its second month seemingly at a stalemate. On Monday, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said Moscow is “revising its war aims” as it repositions its forces to focus on the eastern part of Ukraine.</p> <p>While the U.S. and the United Kingdom blamed Russia’s military intelligence service for attacks that temporarily disabled some Ukrainian government websites, the war has thus far lacked sweeping cyberattacks against Kyiv’s electric grid and other infrastructure.</p> <p>President Joe Biden’s fiscal 2023 budget request seeks to give Cyber Command a major dollar infusion as it contends with adversaries like Russia, China, Iran and North Korea and juggles a portfolio of missions that has grown to include election security and ransomware.</p> <p>The administration’s proposal asks Congress to approve an overall budget of \$717 million for Cyber Command, compared to \$667 million the previous fiscal year, a Pentagon spokesperson told The Record.</p> <p>In his testimony, Nakasone called China a “challenge unlike any other we have faced” and has created a “China Outcomes Group” — a joint Cyber Command and NSA task force — to ensure “proper focus, resourcing, planning, and operations” to counter Beijing’s rising global influence.</p> <p>The four-star also said his command has “taken numerous actions over the past year to combat ransomware” following last year’s high-profile attack on the Colonial Pipeline, with his forces and NSA “passing key insights in near-real time” to law enforcement, industry and others.</p>

	<p>Cyber Command has also begun preparing to defend the 2022 midterms from foreign interference, as it has done so in the previous two national elections. Nakasone said he has once again tapped a Cyber Command general officer and an NSA senior executive to oversee election security ahead of November.</p> <p>“We anticipate that our adversaries will continue using their military and intelligence elements to affect our democracy,” he warned, dubbing election security an “enduring, no-fail mission” for Cyber Command.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Hackers hid inside victims’ network 9mo.
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/these-sneaky-hackers-hid-inside-their-victims-networks-for-nine-months/
GIST	<p>A hacking and cyber espionage operation is going after victims around the world in a widespread campaign designed to snoop on targets and steal information.</p> <p>Identified victims of the cyber attacks include organisations in government, law, religious groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the pharmaceutical sector and telecommunications. Multiple countries have been targeted, including the U.S., Canada, Hong Kong, Japan Turkey, Israel, India, Montenegro, and Italy.</p> <p>Detailed by cybersecurity researchers at Symantec, the campaign is the work of a group they call Cicada – also known as APT10 - a state-sponsored offensive hacking group which western intelligence agencies have linked to Chinese Ministry of State Security. In some cases, the attackers spent as long as nine months inside the networks of victims.</p> <p>APT10 has been active for over a decade, with the earliest evidence of this latest campaign appearing in mid-2021. The most recent activity which has been detailed took place in February 2022 and researchers warn that the campaign could still be ongoing.</p> <p>In several of the detected campaigns, evidence of initial activity on compromised networks has been seen on Microsoft Exchange Servers, suggesting the possibility that the intrusions started with attackers exploiting unpatched vulnerabilities in Microsoft Exchange which came to light in early 2021.</p> <p>Once the attackers gain initial access, they use a variety of tools including Sodamaster, fileless malware which provides a backdoor onto machines, as well as a custom loader for dropping additional payloads. Both forms of malware have been used in previous campaigns by APT10.</p> <p>The malware is capable of evading detection and it also obfuscates and encrypts any information which is sent back to command and control servers operated by the attackers. In addition to custom tools, the campaigns also use publicly available tools, to scan systems and execute commands.</p> <p>The victims being targeted, along with the tools being deployed and the earlier history of the suspected culprit behind the attacks has led researchers to conclude that the most likely goal of the campaign is information theft and intelligence gathering.</p> <p>"The sorts of organisations targeted - nonprofits and government organisations, including those involved in religious and education activity - are most likely to be of interest to the group for espionage purposes," Brigid O Gorman, senior information developer on Symantec threat hunter team told ZDNet.</p> <p>The United States Department of Justice has previously indicted suspected members of APT10 for campaigns around hacking into computer networks and stealing information.</p> <p>The widespread targeting of multiple large organisations around the world suggests the hacking operation has deep resources and researchers suggest that Cicada is still a cybersecurity threat to computer networks considered to be of interest to the attackers.</p>

Defending against a well-resourced nation-state backed hacking group isn't easy, but there are steps which network defenders can take to help avoid becoming the victim of an attack. These include [patching known vulnerabilities](#) – such as those in [Microsoft Exchange](#) which Cicada appear to have exploited – and hardening credentials via the use of [multi-factor authentication](#).

Researchers also recommend the introduction of one-time credentials for administrative work to help prevent theft and misuse of admin logins and that cybersecurity teams should [continuously monitor the network](#) for potentially suspicious activity.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Conti leaks stolen files of industrial giant
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/ransomware-gang-leaks-files-stolen-industrial-giant-parker-hannifin
GIST	<p>A notorious cybercrime group has leaked several gigabytes of files allegedly stolen from US industrial components giant Parker Hannifin.</p> <p>Parker Hannifin specializes in motion and control technologies, and it provides precision engineered solutions for organizations in the aerospace, mobile, and industrial sectors.</p> <p>In a Tuesday regulatory filing, the Fortune 250 company said it detected a breach of its systems on March 14.</p> <p>Upon discovering the intrusion, Parker shut down some systems and launched an investigation. Law enforcement has been notified and cybersecurity and legal experts have been called in to assist.</p> <p>The investigation is ongoing, but the company has confirmed that some data was accessed and taken, including personal information of employees.</p> <p>“Based on its preliminary assessment and on the information currently known, the incident has not had a significant financial or operational impact and the Company does not believe the incident will have a material impact on its business, operations or financial results,” Parker stated. “The Company’s business systems are fully operational, and the Company maintains insurance, subject to certain deductibles and policy limitations typical for its size and industry.”</p> <p>While the company has not shared any additional information regarding the incident, SecurityWeek has checked the websites of major ransomware groups and found that the notorious Conti gang has taken credit for the attack on Parker.</p> <p>The hacker group has published more than 5 Gb of archive files apparently containing documents stolen from Parker, and that may be only a small fraction of the total data they have obtained — the Conti website indicates that only 3% of the stolen data has been leaked.</p> <p>The hackers typically tell victims that they have to pay millions of dollars to recover encrypted files and prevent stolen data from getting leaked.</p> <p>The cybercriminals have targeted hundreds of organizations over the past years, but the group itself became a target in February, after it expressed support for the Russian government following its invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>An individual claiming to be a Ukrainian cybersecurity researcher has leaked vast amounts of Conti data, including malware source code, chat logs, credentials, email addresses, and C&C server details.</p> <p>The leaked information showed that Conti operates just like a regular company, with contractors, employees and HR problems. An analysis conducted by incident response firm BreachQuest revealed that Conti spent roughly \$6 million on employee salaries, tooling and professional services in the past year alone.</p>

HEADLINE	04/06 Threat to Europe industrial infrastructure
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/europe-warned-about-cyber-threat-industrial-infrastructure
GIST	<p>Malicious cyber actors pose a serious threat to Europe’s industrial infrastructure, with at least ten hacker groups known to target European organizations, according to a new report from industrial cybersecurity firm Dragos.</p> <p>The number of threat groups observed targeting organizations with industrial control system (ICS) or other operational technology (OT) environments has increased significantly over the past years. In February, Dragos said it had been tracking 18 such groups, including ones that have actually breached ICS/OT networks.</p> <p>In a report published on Tuesday, Dragos said ten of the threat groups tracked by the company have conducted operations aimed at European entities, including disruptive and destructive attacks. These groups are tracked as Xenotime, Magnallium, Electrum, Allanite, Chrysene, Kamacite, Covellite, Vanadinite, Parisite, and Dymalloy. Some of these groups have been linked to China, Russia, Iran and North Korea.</p> <p>In addition to these advanced persistent threats (APTs), Europe’s industrial sector is often also targeted by profit-driven cybercrime groups.</p> <p>Of the roughly 3,200 OT-specific vulnerabilities tracked by Dragos, nearly 500 directly impact organizations in Europe, and over 100 of them can be exploited to cause loss of view and/or loss of control.</p> <p>However, the cybersecurity firm believes Europe is at low risk for destruction or disruption campaigns targeting industrial infrastructure. From the report:</p> <p><i>“Dragos assesses with moderate confidence Europe is at low risk for widespread Industrial Infrastructure-targeted destruction and disruption campaigns originating from cyberattacks due to the deterrence posed by potential political and economic impact as well as the direct effect on civilian lives and infrastructure.</i></p> <p><i>Additionally, Dragos assesses with low confidence Europe is at a low risk for localized or small-scale disruption or destruction, as motivated state-executed adversaries may perform low-stakes operations when deemed politically or economically advantageous.”</i></p> <p>On the other hand, there are various other threats that should not be ignored by European organizations, and one of them is ransomware. An analysis of the websites operated by various ransomware groups — these are the sites where cybercriminals name and shame victims to convince them to pay up — showed that roughly one-quarter of claimed victims are located in Europe, particularly in the manufacturing sector.</p> <p>“Dragos assesses with moderate confidence ransomware operators will continue to target [Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy], and specifically manufacturing firms located in these countries, motivated by profit,” Dragos said. “While state-affiliated ransomware operations are extremely difficult to prove, Dragos assesses with low confidence this type of attack may occur in DAS+I countries and greater Europe.”</p> <p>Dragos has also highlighted the threat posed to the oil and gas sector by groups such as Xenotime and Dymalloy. The report also highlights the threat to the UK’s energy sector — particularly small energy distributors and power stations — which may be targeted in ransomware or other disruptive attacks.</p> <p>Dragos’ report, which also mentions the theft of intellectual property and insider threats, provides some recommendations for defenders.</p>

	<p>“Dragos assesses with high confidence that the biggest cybersecurity weaknesses European asset owners currently face are a lack of asset visibility into their network and weak network authentication policies,” the company said.</p> <p>“Without asset visibility organizations are unable to properly secure their OT environments as defenders cannot protect what they cannot see. Industrial operators should evaluate and implement the principle of least privilege to limit unauthorized access to OT environments.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Online fraud up 233% during pandemic
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/online-fraud-up-233/
GIST	<p>The rate of online fraud attacks increased by 233% between 2019 and 2021, according to RiskOps platform, Feedzai.</p> <p>The figure was included in the company's newly released quarterly financial crime report, The RiskOps Age, which is based on analysis of over 18 billion global banking transactions throughout 2021.</p> <p>By identifying trends in consumer spending and fraud attacks and comparing transactional intelligence from 2021 with data gathered during the previous three years, the report sheds light on how financial crime evolved during the global COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>A key finding in the report was that while online transactions grew 65%, online fraud attack rates grew by 233%. Alarmingly, fraud targeting digital entertainment increased by 794% from 2019 to 2021.</p> <p>Among the attacks reported at major organizations, Feedzai’s research found 30% of attempted online transactions were fraudulent.</p> <p>Florida, which saw a 202% rise in in-store credit card fraud, was found to be the riskiest state in America for card-present fraud. The data indicates that the fraud was primarily committed in person in 24-hour convenience stores by criminals using stolen debit card PIN codes.</p> <p>Washington DC, New York and Maryland were the second, third and fourth riskiest states respectively. The safest states for fraud were Nebraska and Iowa.</p> <p>Analyzing which attack vectors were most used in 2021, researchers found account takeover (ATO) to be the most common fraud, followed by social engineering attacks, purchase scams, impersonation scams and smishing attacks.</p> <p>Miami, where the fraud rate increased 511% in 2021, was found to be the worst US tourist city for fraud, followed by Los Angeles and San Francisco.</p> <p>“Living the digital lifestyle adds a world of convenience, but also provides a low-risk, high-reward environment for fraudsters,” said Jaime Ferreira, vice president of Global Data Science at Feedzai.</p> <p>“It’s the perfect place for fraudsters to hide – in a massive number of low-dollar amount transactions. The more transactions, the more opportunities for them to test stolen cards or other scams.”</p> <p>Ferreira urged both consumers and banks to watch out for small fraud transactions which can accumulate swiftly and add up to "big bills.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Microsoft detects Spring4Shell attacks
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/microsoft-detects-spring4shell-attacks-across-its-cloud-services/

Microsoft said that it's currently tracking a "low volume of exploit attempts" targeting the critical Spring4Shell (aka SpringShell) remote code execution (RCE) vulnerability across its cloud services.

The [Spring4Shell vulnerability](#) (tracked as CVE-2022-22965) impacts the Spring Framework, described as the "most widely used lightweight open-source framework for Java."

"Microsoft regularly monitors attacks against our cloud infrastructure and services to defend them better," the Microsoft 365 Defender Threat Intelligence Team [said](#).

"Since the Spring Core vulnerability was announced, we have been tracking a low volume of exploit attempts across our cloud services for Spring Cloud and Spring Core vulnerabilities."

Spring4Shell exploited to deploy web shells

Microsoft further explained in their Monday report that attackers could exploit this Spring Core security flaw by sending specially crafted queries to servers running the Spring Core framework to [create web shells](#) in the Tomcat root directory.

Threat actors can then use this web shell to execute commands on the compromised server.

While some have compared this security bug's severity level with Log4Shell, a vulnerability in the ubiquitous Apache Log4j Java-based logging library, this isn't necessarily true given that Spring4Shell only impacts systems with a very particular configuration:

- Running JDK 9.0 or later
- Spring Framework versions 5.3.0 to 5.3.17, 5.2.0 to 5.2.19, and earlier versions
- Apache Tomcat as the Servlet container
- Packaged as a traditional Java web archive (WAR) and deployed in a standalone Tomcat instance; typical Spring Boot deployments using an embedded Servlet container or reactive web server are not impacted
- Tomcat has *spring-webmvc* or *spring-webflux* dependencies

Despite this, Microsoft says that "any system using JDK 9.0 or later and using the Spring Framework or derivative frameworks should be considered vulnerable."

Admins can check their servers to determine if they are vulnerable to Spring4Shell attacks using this nonmalicious command (an HTTP 400 response is evidence that the system is vulnerable to at least one publicly available proof of concept (PoC) exploit):

```
curl host:port/path?class.module.classLoader.URLs%5B0%5D=0
```

Warnings of ongoing exploitation

Microsoft's discovery of ongoing attacks deploying Spring4Shell exploits against its cloud infrastructure comes after the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) [added the vulnerability to its Known Exploited Vulnerabilities catalog](#).

A Check Point report published on Tuesday estimates that CVE-2022-22965 exploitation attempts have already targeted roughly 16% of all organizations vulnerable to Spring4Shell.

Based on internally-sourced telemetry statistics, Check Point researchers [detected](#) around 37,000 Spring4Shell exploitation attempts during the last weekend alone.

On Monday, VMware also [published security updates](#) to address the Spring4Shell flaw impacting several of its cloud computing and virtualization products.

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SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/chinese-hackers-abuse-vlc-media-player-to-launch-malware-loader/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have uncovered a long-running malicious campaign from hackers associated with the Chinese government who are using VLC Media Player to launch a custom malware loader.</p> <p>The campaign appears to serve espionage purposes and has targeted various entities involved in government, legal, and religious activities, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on at least three continents.</p> <p>This activity has been attributed to a threat actor tracked as Cicada (a.k.a. menuPass, Stone Panda, Potassium, APT10, Red Apollo) that has been active for more than 15 years, since at least 2006.</p> <p>Using VLC to deploy custom malware loader</p> <p>The start of Cicada's current campaign has been tracked to mid-2021 and was still active in February 2022. Researchers say that this activity may continue today.</p> <p>There is evidence that some initial access to some of the breached networks was through a Microsoft Exchange server, indicating that the actor exploited a known vulnerability on unpatched machines.</p> <p>Researchers at Symantec, a division of Broadcom, found that after gaining access to the target machine the attacker deployed a custom loader on compromised systems with the help of the popular VLC media player.</p> <p>Brigid O Gorman of Symantec Threat Hunter Team told BleepingComputer that the attacker uses a clean version of VLC with a malicious DLL file in the same path as the media player's export functions.</p> <p>The technique is known as DLL side-loading and it is widely used by threat actors to load malware into legitimate processes to hide the malicious activity.</p> <p>Apart from the custom loader, which O Gorman said Symantec does not have a name but has been seen in previous attacks attributed to Cicada/APT10, the adversary also deployed a WinVNC server to gain remote control over victim systems.</p> <p>The attacker also executed the Sodamaster backdoor on compromised networks, a tool believed to be used exclusively by the Cicada threat group since at least 2020.</p> <p>Sodamaster runs in the system memory (fileless) and is equipped to evade detection by looking in the registry for clues of a sandbox environment or by delaying its execution.</p> <p>The malware can also collect details about the system, search for running processes, and download and execute various payloads from the command and control server.</p> <p>Several other utilities have been observed in this campaign include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAR archiving tool - helps compress, encrypt, or archive files, likely for exfiltration • System/Network discovery - a way for attackers to learn about the systems or services connected to an infected machine • WMIExec - Microsoft command-line tool that can be used to execute commands on remote computers • NBTScan - an open-source tool that has been observed being used by APT groups for reconnaissance in a compromised network <p>The attackers' dwell time on the networks of some of the discovered victims lasted for as long as nine months, the researchers note in a report today.</p> <p>A wider focus</p>

	<p>Many of the organizations targeted in this campaign appear to be government-related or NGOs (involved in educational or religious activities), as well as companies in the telecommunications, legal, and pharmaceutical sectors.</p> <p>Symantec researchers highlight the wide geography of this Cicada campaign, which counts victims in the U.S., Canada, Hong Kong, Turkey, Israel, India, Montenegro, and Italy.</p> <p>To note, only one victim is from Japan, a country that has been the focus of the Cicada group for many years.</p> <p>Compared to the previous targeting from this group, which focused on Japanese-linked companies, the victims in this campaign indicate that the threat actor has broadened its interest.</p> <p>While focused on Japanese-linked companies, Cicada has targeted in the past healthcare, defense, aerospace, finance, maritime, biotechnology, energy, and government sectors.</p> <p>At least two members of the APT10 threat group have been charged in the U.S. for computer hacking activity to help the Chinese Ministry of State Security's (MSS) Tianjin State Security Bureau get intellectual property and confidential business information from managed service providers, U.S. government agencies, and over 45 technology companies.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Intel shuts business ops in Russia
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/technology/intel-shuts-down-all-business-operations-in-russia/
GIST	<p>US chipmaker Intel announced Tuesday night that it had suspended all business operations in Russia, joining tech other companies who pulled out of the country due to the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Intel had already suspended all shipments to customers in Russia and Belarus last month after the US government issued sweeping sanctions that prevented the export of technology to the countries.</p> <p>With today's announcement, Intel is shutting down all business operations in the country, which includes 1,200 employees located in Russia.</p> <p>"Intel continues to join the global community in condemning Russia's war against Ukraine and calling for a swift return to peace," announced Intel in a Tuesday night press release.</p> <p>"Effective immediately, we have suspended all business operations in Russia. This follows our earlier decision to suspend all shipments to customers in Russia and Belarus.</p> <p>Intel says they are working on supporting all of their Russian employees during the shutdown and have implemented business continuity plans to minimize disruption.</p> <p>With AMD, Intel, and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co (TSMC) halting all sales and shipments to Russia, the country is facing an IT crisis that could lead to telecommunication outages and business disruption.</p> <p>Last month, Russia's RSPP Commission for Communications and IT warned of potential Internet service outages due to the lack of available telecom equipment and replacement parts.</p> <p>The Russian government is also allegedly searching for ways to overcome a data storage crisis in the public sector, as data storage companies, including cloud services, are no longer selling to Russia.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Cash App notifies 8.2M of data breach
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SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/cash-app-notifies-82-million-us-customers-about-data-breach/
GIST	<p>Cash App is notifying 8.2 million current and former US customers of a data breach after a former employee accessed their account information.</p> <p>Block, Inc., the owner of Cash App, disclosed in a Form 8-K SEC filing that the breach occurred on December 10th, 2021, after a former employee downloaded internal Cash App reports while no longer employed at the company.</p> <p>Block says that the reports included Cash App customers' full names and brokerage account numbers associated with investment activity on Cash App. For some customers, additional information was exposed in the reports, including portfolio values, holdings, and possibly trading activity for one trading day.</p> <p>As first reported by TechCrunch, the data breach did not include more sensitive information, such as credentials, Social Security numbers, and payment information.</p> <p>"The reports did not include usernames or passwords, Social Security numbers, date of birth, payment card information, addresses, bank account information, or any other personally identifiable information," reads Block's Form 8-K filing.</p> <p>"They also did not include any security code, access code, or password used to access Cash App accounts. Other Cash App products and features (other than stock activity) and customers outside of the United States were not impacted."</p> <p>In response to our requests for more details, a Cash App spokesperson shared the following statement with BleepingComputer.</p> <p>"At Cash App we value customer trust and are committed to the security of customers' information. Upon discovery, we took steps to remediate this issue and launched an investigation with the help of a leading forensics firm. We know how these reports were accessed, and we have notified law enforcement. We are also contacting customers whose data was impacted. In addition, we continue to review and strengthen administrative and technical safeguards to protect information."</p> <p>Block says that they are notifying the 8.2 million customers impacted by the breach to provide further information about the incident.</p> <p>The company also states that they notified regulation authorities and law enforcement about the breach.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Free tool detect, remediate Spring4Shell
SOURCE	https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2022/04/05/whitesource-spring4shell-detect/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>WhiteSource launched WhiteSource Spring4Shell Detect, a free command-line interface (CLI) tool that quickly scans projects to find vulnerable open source libraries for CVE-2022-22965, also known as Spring4Shell.</p> <p>Spring4Shell is a remote code execution (RCE) vulnerability in Spring, one of the most popular open-source frameworks for Java applications in use today. While we are still learning about this vulnerability, its impact is likely on par with that of Log4j and it is considered extremely critical with a severity score of 9.8. WhiteSource's free developer tool, which is available now on GitHub, provides developers with the exact path to direct and indirect dependencies, along with the fixed version, for speedy remediation.</p> <p>"Organizations and security teams must approach Spring4Shell with the same attention and urgency they did with the recent Log4j vulnerability," said Rami Sass, CEO, WhiteSource. "This vulnerability highlights the importance of a proactive approach to software security and the need for more automated</p>

	<p>application security to be baked into the development lifecycle. Ensure you are handling your technical debt, and update.”</p> <p>Given the potential widespread impact and risk of this zero-day vulnerability, WhiteSource recommends organizations take the following steps to address and prevent similar instances in the future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory your entire application list to identify all instances of CVE-2022-22965. This can be done using WhiteSource’s free detection tool. • Update your vulnerable versions of Spring Framework to the latest version. Use tools such as WhiteSource Renovate, which can automatically update your libraries with the latest available fixes. • Generate a software bill of materials (SBOM) for all applications in your environment. An SBOM provides visibility to your entire software attack surface — both direct and transitive dependencies — and helps you react quickly to vulnerability announcements. <p>WhiteSource Renovate, which has more than one hundred million downloads, automatically updates dependencies and has already identified and mitigated the Spring4Shell vulnerability for tens of thousands of enterprises around the world.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Fake claims of Ukraine surrender; why?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/us/politics/ukraine-russia-hackers.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Andriy Taranov, a board member at the Ukrainian public broadcasting company Suspilne, was sitting in his office last month when he noticed a strange message running across the bottom of the television screen. It said Volodymyr Zelensky, the president of Ukraine, had announced a surrender.</p> <p>Mr. Taranov was stunned because there had been no chatter about a surrender among reporters covering Russia’s invasion of the country. “There’s nothing like that in any journalist circle,” he remembered thinking. “It looks absolutely contradictory.”</p> <p>The message was fake, he quickly realized. It had been planted on the chyron of Media Group Ukraine’s live broadcast by hackers.</p> <p>Since Russia’s invasion began in late February, hackers have repeatedly broken into the social media accounts and broadcasting systems of trusted information sources in Ukraine, like government officials and prominent media outlets. They used their access to spread false messages that Ukraine was surrendering, sometimes using fake videos to bolster their claims.</p> <p>And while there is no evidence that the misinformation campaign has had any discernible effect on the conflict, experts say the hackers’ intentions might not be to actually trick anyone. Instead, the hackers are most likely trying to erode confidence in Ukrainian institutions and show that the government and news media cannot be relied upon for information or to keep hackers out of their systems. The tactics mirror those used in other Russian disinformation campaigns, which have focused on fomenting divisions and cultural conflict.</p> <p>“You can build uncertainty, confusion and distrust,” said Ben Read, a director at the cybersecurity firm Mandiant. “It doesn’t need to stand up to a close reading to have some effect on the population; it erodes trust in all messages.”</p> <p>Facebook traced one hacking campaign, which targeted military officials, to state-sponsored hackers in Belarus. Other cyberattacks, including those against media outlets and telecommunications networks, have not yet been attributed to specific state actors.</p> <p>But Ukrainian officials suspect that Russia is behind the hacking and disinformation.</p>

“Of course they are behind these attacks,” said Victor Zhora, deputy head of Ukraine’s cybersecurity agency, the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection.

“This is the first time in history we deal with a conventional war and a cyberwar at the same time,” Mr. Zhora said. “It completely changes our landscape for what is happening around Ukraine.”

The attempts to spread disinformation about a Ukrainian surrender started days after Russia’s invasion began. Hackers broke into the Facebook accounts of high-profile Ukrainian military leaders and politicians, then used their access to post false messages announcing a surrender. They accompanied some of the posts with videos of soldiers waving a white flag, falsely claiming that the footage depicted Ukrainian soldiers.

Meta, the parent company of Facebook, said it quickly detected the attack and in some cases was able to prevent the hackers from posting fake messages from the compromised accounts. The hackers were affiliated with a group that security researchers call Ghostwriter, Meta said, which has been linked to Belarus.

Ghostwriter frequently targets public figures in Europe, security researchers said, often using compromised social media and email accounts to push messages intended to chip away at support for NATO. Since the war in Ukraine began, the group has focused its efforts there, according to researchers.

“They’re aligned with Russian goals,” Mr. Read said of Ghostwriter.

In mid-March, Ukrainian officials detected another hacking campaign that tried to spread false information about a surrender. According to the Security Service of Ukraine, the country’s law enforcement and intelligence agency, a hacker set up a relay system to help route calls for the Russian military. The system was also used to send text messages to Ukrainian security forces and civil servants, urging them to surrender and to support Russia, the law enforcement agency said.

The Security Service of Ukraine said it had arrested the person responsible for the messages, who it said had placed thousands of calls each day on behalf of the Russian military.

Another, more visible attempt to spread disinformation about a surrender soon followed. On March 16, a “deepfake” video of Mr. Zelensky asking Ukrainians to lay down their weapons and surrender to Russia emerged on social media.

Hackers targeted television stations and news outlets in Ukraine to spread the digitally manipulated video, broadcasting it on Ukraine 24, a television station operated by Media Group Ukraine, and posting it to the outlet’s YouTube channel.

Media Group Ukraine said it believed Russian hackers were responsible. “Our systems have been under constant attack for over two weeks, before being hacked,” said Olha Nosyk, a spokeswoman for the company. “We have strengthened the protection and applied the necessary technical means to prevent such incidents from recurring.”

Deepfakes like the one of Mr. Zelensky use artificial intelligence to create seemingly realistic footage of people doing and saying things that they did not actually say or do. Researchers have warned that the technology could be exploited during elections and other high-profile political moments to spread lies about prominent politicians.

Oleksiy Makukhin, an expert who has worked on combating misinformation in Ukraine, said he first saw the digitally manipulated video of Mr. Zelensky circulating on the messaging app Telegram. But many of the messages about the video highlighted the fact that it was a fake and poked fun at it for being poorly made, Mr. Makukhin said.

	<p>“I hardly can think of any person in Ukraine who believed in it,” he said. “People in Ukraine are already rather educated about disinformation, which Russia is distributing all the time.”</p> <p>Still, Mr. Zelensky took to his official channel on Telegram to deny the video’s claims. “We are defending our land, our children, our families,” he said. “So we don’t plan to lay down any arms until our victory.”</p> <p>On Friday, the Security Service of Ukraine said it had discovered another text message campaign that had pushed over 5,000 messages about surrendering using a bot farm linked to Russia. “The outcome of events is predetermined!” the text messages said, according to the agency. “Be prudent and refuse to support nationalism and leaders of the country who discredited themselves and already fled the capital!!!”</p> <p>Mr. Makukhin said he believed the disinformation was an effort to frighten civilians, comparing it to the shelling of neighborhoods.</p> <p>“I think the only reason for it is to terrorize the population, to make pressure and eventually try with this pressure to make our government surrender,” he said. “There is still general consensus in society that we cannot surrender. Otherwise all this pain and death were for nothing.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Russia-linked ‘Armageddon’ phishing
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ukraine-spots-russian-linked-armageddon-phishing-attacks/
GIST	<p>The Computer Emergency Response Team of Ukraine (CERT-UA) has spotted new phishing attempts attributed to the Russian threat group tracked as Armageddon (Gamaredon).</p> <p>The malicious emails attempt to trick the recipients with lures themed after the war in Ukraine and infect the target systems with espionage-focused malware.</p> <p>CERT-UA has identified two separate cases, one targeting Ukrainian organizations and the other focusing on government agencies in the European Union.</p> <p>Who is Armageddon</p> <p>Armageddon is a Russian state-sponsored threat actor who has been targeting Ukraine since at least 2014 and is considered part of the FSB (Russian Federal Security Service).</p> <p>According to a detailed technical report published by the Ukrainian secret service in November 2021, Armageddon has launched at least 5,000 cyber-attacks against 1,500 critical entities in the country.</p> <p>The Ukrainian forces have previously identified members of the Armageddon cyber-force, exposed their toolset, and traced custom malware development efforts to Russian hacking forums.</p> <p>As such, even in chaotic wartime situations where cyber-response teams have limited resources and time, some attributions can be made with greater confidence due to the extensive identification efforts that took place in the past.</p> <p>Ukraine-focused campaign</p> <p>Armageddon’s Ukraine-targeting campaign distributes emails on “Information on war criminals of the Russian Federation,” to various government agencies in the country.</p> <p>The emails, sent from “vadim_melnik88@i[.]ua”, contain an HTML attachment that CERT-UA says has low detections by security software at this time.</p> <p>If opened, a RAR file is automatically created and dropped on the computer, supposedly containing the identification details of those responsible for war crimes in Ukraine in a shortcut file (.lnk).</p>

However, clicking on this LNK file will download another HTA file laced with VBScript code that runs a PowerShell script to fetch the final payload.

EU campaign

In the campaign targeting various EU government officials, Armageddon uses RAR archive attachments named “Assistance” and “Necessary_military_assistance”.

Those archives contain shortcut files (.lnk) that supposedly include lists of things needed for military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. Opening that file triggers the same malware infection chain described in the previous section.

The sender’s address is “info@military-ukraine[.]site”, which may pass as legitimate, while the signee is supposedly the Deputy Commander for Armaments and Major General in Ukraine.

The CERT-UA has confirmed at least one case of these emails reaching the inbox of the Latvian government. As such, the same campaign is likely targeting more European governments.

This report is in line with other recent findings of Russia-originating attacks targeting EU entities, like last week’s [Google TAG](#) phishing campaign report, the deployment of [wiper-malware](#) against the KA-SAT satellite service, GPS system interference in [the Baltic region](#), and phishing attacks against those [aiding with the refugee crisis](#).

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HEADLINE	04/05 FBI \$millions social media tracking software
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/05/fbi-is-spending-millions-social-media-tracking-software/
GIST	<p>A new FBI contract is raising surveillance concerns</p> <p>FBI Director Christopher Wray should testify to Congress about the contract, says Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), the top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee. (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)</p> <p>Social media users seemed to foreshadow the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol — and the FBI apparently missed it.</p> <p>Now, the FBI is doubling down on tracking social media posts, spending millions of dollars on thousands of licenses to powerful social media monitoring technology that privacy and civil liberties advocates say raise serious concerns.</p> <p>The FBI has contracted for 5,000 licenses to use Babel X, a software made by Babel Street that lets users search social media sites within a geographic area and use other parameters.</p> <p>The contract began March 30 and is worth as much as \$27 million. The FBI has already agreed to pay an IT vendor around \$5 million for the first year of the contract, procurement records indicate. The contract has not previously been reported.</p> <p>The Justice Department has previously had Babel X in its arsenal, contracting records show. But the new contract appears to be by far the most the agency has ever shelled out for the software, and is one of the largest contracts for the software by a civilian agency, experts said.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “It’s both per-year the biggest I’m aware of in terms of obligation, and it’s also the fact that it’s a five-year contract,” said Jack Poulson, who runs the research advocacy group Tech Inquiry. “So if you combine those two things, it’s the biggest Babel Street contract I’m aware of.” <p>And while it’s not clear what exactly the contract entails, contracting documents provide a blueprint for the FBI’s aspirations for the technology. The FBI, Babel Street and IT vendor Panamerica Computers didn’t respond to requests for comment about the terms of the contract.</p> <p>Political fallout</p> <p>Social media monitoring is still controversial on Capitol Hill, where the contract could be scrutinized by lawmakers in both parties. Some Democrats are anxious about creeping government surveillance, while Republicans have focused on the idea that the government could be monitoring political speech.</p>

Rep. Jim Jordan (Ohio), top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee, told The Cybersecurity 202 that he's calling for a briefing by the FBI on the issue.

- Jordan said he has “real concerns based on the [FBI’s] history and based on the fact that we don't know how they're using it and who they're going after,” noting that he'd like FBI Director **Christopher A. Wray** to testify before the committee so he can get answers about the contract, NSO Group's [Pegasus spyware](#) and other issues.

The FBI's asks

The FBI awarded the contract for 5,000 Babel X licenses after telling contractors it wanted software to “gather information” from “Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Deep/Dark Web, VK and Telegram.”

- **Also on the list:** The FBI listed a slew of “preferable” — but not required — platforms, including 8Kun, Discord, Gab, Parler, Reddit, Snapchat, TikTok and Weibo.
- Inclusion of conservative-preferred social media networks Gab and Parler on that list could also draw Republican attention on Capitol Hill.

In contracting documents, the FBI estimates that its 5,000 licensees will run around 20,000 keyword searches every month, though it cautioned that that’s “merely an estimate.” (For context, the FBI last year [got funding](#) for around 36,000 employees — including around 13,000 special agents and 3,000 intelligence analysts.)

In its contracting documents, the FBI reiterates that it only wants access to publicly available information, “meaning no logins or court orders are required to access them.” **Tools searching for such information “provide critical information without being intrusive because the data they return is publicly available,”** the FBI said in a document.

Surveillance practices

At first glance, the FBI seems to have a point: Why would it be a privacy violation to analyze and probe information that anyone can see?

But: the FBI will be looking at a vast amount of data as part of the contract, with contracting documents asking for searches and translation abilities in at least seven foreign languages, along with geofencing and even analyzing emotions and sentiments to “be able to determine likely attitudes of the targets.” It also added other features, like emoji searches, “predictive analytics” and bot detection, as being optional but desired.

“Five-thousand licenses for social media monitoring in real time means that thousands of FBI agents will be looking for key words and topics on an ongoing basis with social media surveillance targeting at least eight languages,” said **Greg Nojeim**, a senior counsel and co-director at the Center for Democracy and Technology’s Security and Surveillance Project. **“The risk of misinterpretation is high. So is the risk that an FBI agent who misinterpreted what you said on social media will come knocking on your door.”**

“It turns out that people dismissed as paranoid because they thought Big Brother was watching everything they say on social media were not paranoid after all,” Nojeim said.

The efficacy of features that claim to analyze online sentiments is also unclear. “There is little evidence that sentiment analysis which is part of the project is at all accurate,” said **Faiza Patel**, who co-directs the Brennan Center for Justice’s Liberty and National Security Program.

Concerns

Matt Cagle, a staff attorney at the ACLU of Northern California, said social media surveillance raises civil liberties concerns even if the surveillance is focused on public posts and profiles.

- “The First Amendment protects online speech, period,” he said. “People should not have to exercise their free speech behind privacy settings in order to avoid being surveilled.”

- The FBI's guidelines are “so lax that they permit this social media surveillance even in ‘assessments’ when the FBI lacks the scintilla of evidence of crime that it needs to open a preliminary investigation,” **Nojeim** said.

The FBI says its “intent is to analyze past events,” although it also wants to continuously run “persistent,” automated searches as often as every eight minutes, the documents show. In the documents, the FBI said a “predictive analytics” feature — to “point toward possible actions of a subject or group” — would be “desirable.”

That’s also cause for concern, Cagle said.

“The government also wants the ability to predict the future based on social media posts — not only is this impossible, in all likelihood it will risk further bias and harm against the same people that the government has historically mislabeled as suspicious, including movement leaders, immigrants and members of religious and ethnic minorities,” he said.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Nestlé hack: war-related hacktivism risks
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/nestles-data-leak-shows-war-related-hacktivism-risks-11649151002
GIST	<p>Companies, already warned to remain alert to potential Russian cyberattacks, are battling operations by online activists aiming to bruise corporate reputations amid the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Recent public campaigns by the hacker collective Anonymous against Nestlé SA and other companies continuing to operate in Russia underline the increasing business risks. The high visibility of hacktivists requires extra efforts from companies in internal response and outward crisis communication, cybersecurity and risk experts said.</p> <p>“The claim of a breach can cause a significant disruption of operations in a business because they need to put resources into investigating it,” said Scott Algeier, executive director of the Information Technology Information Sharing and Analysis Center.</p> <p>In a short period of time, he added, a lot of incident response, including public relations and internal communication between the network security team and legal teams, has to be done.</p> <p>In the Nestlé incident, KelvinSecurity, which describes itself as a hacker group that “joins the virtual community to transmit important information,” obtained the exposed data through a flawed configuration of a cloud server used by the food giant, a representative for the group told the Journal. The original plan was to sell the data, the Kelvin representative said. Instead, the group “decided to release it to collaborate with the hacking operation against Russia,” the person said, adding that Kelvin worked with Anonymous to get the word out.</p> <p>Anonymous said in a tweet on March 22 that it released 10 gigabytes of Nestlé’s internal data, including emails, passwords and customer information, in “retaliation for continuing the company’s business in Russia.”</p> <p>In a statement to the Journal, a Nestlé representative denied the company was hacked, saying the claim had “no foundation.”</p> <p>Nestlé said the exposed data are related to an incident in February in which information was unintentionally posted online on a business test website.</p> <p>After the Anonymous tweet, Nestlé deployed resources to investigate the claims, craft a response and communicate with the public and clients.</p> <p>Nestlé had already been subject to immense pressure from politicians, employees and consumers about its Russian operations. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had earlier mentioned Nestlé by name in</p>

several speeches calling for Western businesses to pull out of Russia. On March 23, the company said it would scale back its business in Russia, suspending the production of pet food, coffee and confectionery.

A Twitter account linked to Anonymous, @YourAnonTV, has warned a long list of businesses operating in Russia to withdraw and threatened to hack them if they continue operations in the country. "We give you 48 hours to reflect and withdraw from Russia," one tweet from March 20 said, "or else you will be under our target!"

Companies such as Bridgestone Corp. and Dunkin' Brands, promptly replied to the tweet saying they had already withdrawn from Russia.

"We simply wanted to set the record straight," said Steven Kinkade, vice president of communications at Bridgestone Americas Inc.

Dunkin' didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Cyberexperts said hackers can be harder to deal with than hackers out for financial gain because their primary motive is to draw attention and are often less fearful of prosecution.

The Anonymous collective has participated in hacking operations related to political movements around the world, including the 2011 Syrian uprising, 2019 Hong Kong protests and 2020 Black Lives Matter movement.

Publicity is the goal for hackers, said Meredith Griffanti, co-head of the cybersecurity and data privacy communications practice at business advisory firm FTI Consulting Inc. Part of their strategy is to antagonize, she said. "[They] will react in public forums to anything the victimized company says or does."

While hackers usually don't have the advanced tooling and techniques of nation-states or financially motivated hackers, they also care less about hiding their online tracks, said Jake Williams, director of cyber threat intelligence at Scythe, a vulnerability assessment company.

"That allows them to be a bit louder, very much louder," he said. "A financially motivated threat actor that gets caught early, is obviously not making any money."

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HEADLINE	04/05 Top ransomware gangs reel in cash
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ransomware-war-conti-revil-hellokitty/
GIST	<p>The same week in late February that Russian troops rolled into Ukraine, one of the world's most potent Kremlin-aligned hacking gangs threatened to attack the U.S. and NATO allies. The so-called Conti group, notorious for its use of ransomware to extort millions from hospitals and emergency services, now threatened to target America's critical infrastructure — vital systems like the power grid and water supply.</p> <p>For three tense days, cyber-defense professionals anxiously anticipated the group's next move. Then, with little warning, the gang blew up.</p> <p>Conti's network was allegedly infiltrated by a Ukrainian security researcher who leaked the group's secrets on Twitter, including its chat records, ransomware code and financial details. The leak revealed that Conti was disorganized and prone to internal squabbles. They were also one of the most profitable hacking crews in the world.</p> <p>"Ransomware-as-a-service," known as RaaS, has exploded in popularity in recent years, with criminal gangs raking in cash extorted from health care providers, retailers, manufacturers, colleges, local governments and many other organizations. Such schemes shot up up 85% last year from 2020, and individual demands increased 144% to \$2.2 million. The average payment was up 78%, to roughly \$541,000, according to a new report by Unit 42, a threat research team at Palo Alto Networks.</p>

"The vast majority of ransomware actors are financially motivated. RaaS makes carrying out attacks significantly easier by lowering the barrier to entry and expanding the reach of ransomware," Unit 42's Ryan Olson told CBS News. "As organizations continue to pay ransoms, the more these actors invest in their ransomware organizations and are fueled to continue their efforts."

Many hacking groups operate like a business that is run "for criminals, by criminals, with agreements that set terms, often in exchange for monthly fees or a percentage of ransoms paid," Olson said, adding that the groups often are compartmentalized with departments focused on tasks like administration, coding, marketing and security testing.

These three organizations accounted for more than a third of ransomware activity last year:

Conti

Conti's growth was astronomical and unprecedented, Olson said. In the two years prior to the leaks that led to the group's implosion, their activities surged. Conti was responsible for more security incidents than any other ransomware gang. The group stole and publicly released private information from over 600 companies and government organizations. Their average ransom demand rose from just \$178,000 in early 2020 to nearly \$1.8 million last year.

"They're ruthless," Olson said, noting the group's willingness to go after more vulnerable targets like hospitals, health care providers, municipal governments and law enforcement agencies. "They operate without a code of honor."

On a dark web forum in February, Conti [announced](#) its "full support" of the Russian government and threatened to use its "full capacity to deliver retaliatory measures" if NATO allies targeted Russian infrastructure with cyberattacks.

REvil

REvil is best known for [demanding](#) \$70 million in 2021 from software infrastructure provider Kaseya — the biggest ransomware attack on record. The group pioneered [ransomware-as-a-service](#), a business model that allows cybercriminals to sell their hacking expertise and launch attacks using their own particular ransomware software.

REvil's software would [infect and lock](#) networked office workstations, often shutting down the targeted business [until a ransom demand](#) was paid. REvil's demands varied, depending on the size of the company and type of data stolen. If a company failed to pay, REvil would [double](#) their ransom demands and publish the stolen data. Unit 42 analysts found that REvil's average demand in 2021 jumped to \$2.2 million, more than four times the \$500,000 it had asked for previously. Their highest ransom demand last year was \$5.4 million.

The group was allegedly [dismantled](#) recently by Russia's internal security agency at the [request](#) of several international law enforcement agencies, including U.S. authorities.

HelloKitty

The HelloKitty group might be less famous than rival ransomware gangs, but they are pioneers. In early 2020 a Linux-variant of its ransomware targeted VMWare's software used in data centers. HelloKitty is best known for allegedly having stolen and released source code from Polish video game developer [CD Projekt Red](#).

The gang, also known as FiveHands, favored corporate targets and used a multipronged attack, often threatening to release stolen data on the dark web and hammering victims with [denial of service](#) attacks if ransom demands weren't met. Law enforcement agencies believe that prior to the Russian invasion, the group [operated](#) from eastern Ukraine.

	<p>While not as financially successful as other major ransomware gangs, HelloKitty's tactics and tech were innovative, inspiring more famous ransomware operators.</p> <p>"Cybercrime is a cat-and-mouse game," Olson said "There are always ways to stop attackers from being successful. However attackers will continue to evolve and innovate their tactics. It's critical to be prepared and educated on the latest threats so you know how to protect your organization."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Germany shuts darknet market; seize \$25M
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/germany-shuts-worlds-largest-darknet-market-us/story?id=83892093
GIST	<p>German authorities took down the world's largest illegal marketplace on the darknet with the help of U.S. law enforcement agencies, they said.</p> <p>Hydra Market was a Russian-language marketplace that had operated via the Tor network since at least 2015 and was known for extensive drug trafficking, according to German authorities. The market's 17 million known customers were also known to buy and sell forged documents and stolen credit cards, they said. In 2020, its sales amounted to well over \$1 billion euros.</p> <p>German authorities said they seized Hydra's server infrastructure and about \$25 million in bitcoin on Tuesday.</p> <p>"The seizures carried out today were preceded by extensive investigations that have been conducted...since August 2021 and in which several US authorities were involved," the German federal police announced.</p> <p>Numerous U.S. agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Administration, the IRS Criminal Investigation and others were involved in the operation, they said.</p> <p>The investigation targeted the operators and administrators of Hydra, according to German authorities. Among other things, authorities said the market was being used for criminal transactions, money laundering and abundant sales of illegal narcotics.</p> <p>Hydra was the illegal marketplace with the highest turnover worldwide, German authorities said. Its sales amounted to at least 1.23 billion euros in 2020 alone. It also offered a service for obfuscating digital transactions, complicating crypto investigations for law enforcement agencies.</p> <p>In addition to the law enforcement actions taking down Hydra's illegal marketplace, the U.S. sanctioned the company, along with a virtual currency exchange based in Estonia, the U.S. Treasury Department said in a statement.</p> <p>"The global threat of cybercrime and ransomware that originates in Russia, and the ability of criminal leaders to operate there with impunity, is deeply concerning to the United States," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in the statement. "Our actions send a message today to criminals that you cannot hide on the darknet or their forums, and you cannot hide in Russia or anywhere else in the world."</p> <p>Hydra accounted for some 86% of illicit Bitcoin transactions in Russia in 2019, according to the U.S. Treasury, while Estonian exchange Garantex was used for over \$100 million in virtual currency transactions associated with illicit actors. Estonian authorities stripped Garantex of its license in February, but it continued to operate "through unscrupulous means," the department said.</p> <p>These sanctions are an attempt by the Biden administration to show that virtual currency will not be able to evade U.S. and international sanctions on Russia or other criminal actors.</p> <p>The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control "is closely monitoring any efforts to circumvent or violate Russia-related sanctions, including through the use of virtual currency, and is</p>

	committed to using its broad enforcement authorities to act against violations and to promote compliance," the department said.
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/05 UN report: ISIS 'weakening' in Africa
SOURCE	https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2022/04/05/un-security-council-says-isis-weakening-in-africa-as-fighters-desert-group/
GIST	<p>The deaths of leading ISIS terrorists and the desertion of thousands of fighters from the group has left it in a "weakened" position, a report by the UN Security Council has found.</p> <p>Civil Society Perspectives: ISIS in Africa – Key Trends and Developments was compiled by the UN body's Counter-terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (Cted) after meetings with more than 50 representatives of African civil society organisations, in 15 member states.</p> <p>The report was conducted to increase understanding of the impact of ISIS-affiliated groups in Africa and identify gaps in the way nations are tackling them.</p> <p>"Roundtable participants emphasised that ISIS-affiliated groups were currently in a crucial period," it says.</p> <p>"The relatively recent deaths of Abu Musab Al Barnawi of ISWAP [IS West Africa Province], Abubakar Shekau of Boko Haram and Adnan Abu Walid Al Sahrawi of ISGS [IS in the Greater Sahara], and the desertion of thousands of individuals from the groups' ranks, signalled a possible weakening of ISIS-affiliated groups in parts of Africa.</p> <p>"Those developments represented an opportunity for a renewed, holistic approach that took into account the local aspects of the phenomenon, employed transitional justice approaches (including criminal justice) and prevention mechanisms to enhance States' resilience, strengthened pathways out of conflict, and included robust steps towards preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism."</p> <p>It has made recommendations on ways to prevent the group's spread and said a core consideration was supporting former terrorists.</p> <p>"Inadequate exit strategies and support provided to former terrorists after they leave reintegration programmes, leads them to consider rejoining terrorist groups," it said.</p> <p>It said there had been a lack of compensation and support for victims and that local populations, particularly women, have been disproportionately affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism.</p> <p>It also says authorities have failed to take advantage of the "positive role that civil society, community, and women can play in preventing terrorism, building resilience and reintegrating former fighters".</p> <p>Cted said that since ISIS suffered territorial losses in Syria and Iraq, it has made Africa a target, establishing branches in several nations of the continent.</p> <p>"A growing number of ISIS-affiliated groups in Africa have shown an ability to launch deadly and co-ordinated attacks, capture strategic territories, recruit followers using anti-government propaganda, and conscript child soldiers," it said.</p> <p>"The frequency of ISIS attacks and the resulting casualties across the continent indicate that African states are facing an unprecedented terrorist threat. This trend is buttressed by attacks claimed by ISIS affiliates, which reflect the growth in attacks on the African continent.</p>

	<p>“ISIS forms affiliations with local groups, exploiting structural issues like corruption, unemployment and poor governance to recruit fighters and drive a wedge between authorities and communities.</p> <p>“But communities across terrorism-affected regions in Africa continue to exhibit strong resilience in dealing with terrorist threats.”</p> <p>It is recommending that nations develop strategies to address the underlying causes of violent extremism conducive to terrorism whilst strengthening the resilience, especially in border areas, of people harmed by terrorism.</p> <p>“Engage in dialogue with fighters and terrorist groups, including through respected local community and religious leaders, in areas where confidence in government is lacking,” it concludes.</p> <p>“Implement educational reforms to change attitudes, including by incorporating peacebuilding into academic curriculums, educating audiences to enhance their understanding of radicalisation and detect signs of radicalisation, and developing national youth service programmes that help to build national pride.”</p> <p>The report was released ahead of another meeting of the UN Security Council shortly to examine the issue.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 AQ leader praises defiant India woman
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/al-qaida-leader-circulates-video-dispels-rumor-death-83905235
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD -- A rare video has appeared of al-Qaida's chief praising an Indian Muslim woman who in February defied a ban on hijab wearing, revealing the first proof in months that he is still alive.</p> <p>Rumors of the death of Ayman al-Zawahri have persistently circulated, but in a video released Tuesday and translated by the SITE Intelligence Group, the reclusive al-Qaida chief praises Muskan Khan who defied a ban on the wearing of the hijab in schools in India's southwestern state of Karnataka.</p> <p>She shouted “God Is Great” as Hindu radical students jeered at her over the Islamic headscarf. In March the court in India's Karnataka state upheld the ban, outraging civil activists and Muslim groups in India and elsewhere.</p> <p>A previous video of Zawahri, which circulated on the anniversary last year of 9/11, did not reference the Taliban's August takeover. It did mention the Jan. 1, 2021 attack that targeted Russian troops on the edge of the northern Syrian city of Raqqa.</p> <p>“He could still be dead, though if so, it would have been at some point in or after Jan 2021,” tweeted Rita Katz, SITE's director following Zawahri's 9/11 anniversary video.</p> <p>From Tuesday's video there is no clear indication of the location of Zawahri. He is shown in a traditional white head scarf beside a poster praising “the noble woman of India.”</p> <p>However, it raises the specter of al-Qaida having a presence in Afghanistan, and highlights concerns over the commitment of the ruling Taliban to fight terrorist groups and deny them space in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Zawahri took over leadership of al-Qaida after the 2011 death of Osama bin Laden, killed by U.S. Navy SEALs during a daring nighttime raid deep inside Pakistan where he was hiding. Bin Laden, who masterminded the 9/11 attacks in the United States, was found in the Pakistani garrison town of Abbottabad, barely 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the capital Islamabad.</p>

	<p>Zawahri has been rumored to be in Afghanistan's northwestern Kunar and Badakhshan provinces on the border with Pakistan. The border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan is lined with inhospitable mountain ranges that have served as redoubts for a number of terrorist groups in the region.</p> <p>Amir Rana, executive director of the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies think tank said that Zawahri was also rumored to be in Pakistan's southern port city of Karachi, where many of the Taliban leaders long maintained homes during Afghanistan's 20-year war.</p> <p>"He was even rumored to have died in Karachi," said Rana, adding that regardless of his location, Zawahri's video is certain to cause headaches for the ruling Taliban with the international community.</p> <p>Afghanistan's Taliban were ousted by a U.S.-led coalition in 2001 for harboring bin Laden. They returned in August last year after a chaotic end to the U.S. and NATO 20-year war in Afghanistan.</p> <p>They say they're adhering to an agreement they signed with the United States in 2020 — before taking power — in which they promised to fight terrorists. Since returning to power they have repeatedly said that Afghanistan would not be used as a launching pad for attacks against other countries.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Germany targets extremists; arrests 4
SOURCE	https://www.wdrb.com/news/national/germany-arrests-4-in-investigation-of-far-right-groups/article_c2e9d976-0498-59a0-87f8-ba0cdd687941.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN (AP) — German authorities on Wednesday arrested four alleged members of a far-right group in an investigation targeting several extremist organizations.</p> <p>The four men, identified only as Leon R., Maximilian A., Eric K. and Bastian A. in line with local privacy rules, were detained in central Germany, federal prosecutors said.</p> <p>They said the four were leading members of a far-right combat sports group, "Knockout 51," which held training sessions at the local headquarters of a small far-right party in the eastern city of Eisenach and aimed to indoctrinate young men and train them in street fighting.</p> <p>The group, which has links to far-right players in other parts of Germany, tried to set up a "Nazi neighborhood" in Eisenach and its members injured several people, prosecutors said. They also allegedly traveled to protests against coronavirus restrictions at which there were clashes with police and counter-protesters.</p> <p>In all, 61 properties in various parts of Germany were raided on Wednesday. Prosecutors said they also are investigating 21 people suspected of keeping alive the "Combat 18 Deutschland" group despite a ban by German authorities.</p> <p>They are investigating 10 people suspected of being members of or supporting an organization called "Atomwaffen Division Deutschland." Prosecutors described it as a terrorist group and a German offshoot of "Atomwaffen Division," a white supremacist organization that has existed in the U.S. since 2015. Leon R. is one of the suspects in that case.</p> <p>And prosecutors said five people are under investigation in connection with "SKD 1418," a far-right chat group that was active in 2019 and 2020.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Taliban crack down on social freedoms
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/taliban-crack-down-on-social-freedoms-with-even-stricter-policing-11649156657?mod=hp_listb_pos4

KABUL—From a white pickup truck crawling through a busy street in west Kabul, members of the Taliban’s religious police, dressed in white tunics and black turbans, admonished fellow Afghans through a loudspeaker mounted on the roof of the car.

“Dear Muslim brothers and sisters, hijab and implementation of Shariah law is the duty of every Muslim,” they shouted, referring to Muslim clothing for women.

“You, girl, fix your head scarf. Your hair is showing,” another religious policeman scolded a woman during another patrol. “Who are you showing off to?”

The Taliban have in recent weeks introduced draconian social restrictions, which in particular curb the freedoms of women, even as the group seeks international recognition after toppling the Western-backed republic in August.

Most notably, the Taliban last week decided to uphold a ban on secondary and schools for girls. They also banned live music at weddings and barred international media outlets such as the British Broadcasting Corp. and Voice of America from broadcasting in local languages.

Women must be accompanied by a male relative when traveling beyond 48 miles. In parts of Afghanistan, women are required to be accompanied by a male guardian to receive medical treatment.

When the Taliban took over in August, they sought to project a softer image than during their first time in power, for instance promising to respect the rights of women within the framework of Islam. Since then, the Taliban have hardened their position on a range of issues, a reflection that the group’s ultraconservative members are prevailing over moderates, at least on social policies. While the Taliban collectively adhere to a hard-line interpretation of Sunni Islam, there are disagreements within the group about how harshly to enforce rules such as gender segregation.

The more pragmatic members of the Taliban are worried that allowing religious policemen to aggressively enforce social rules could alienate the population and prolong their international isolation. Ideologues within the Taliban—including Haibatullah Akhundzada, the movement’s supreme leader—appear less concerned about a possible backlash.

In recent weeks, uniformed members of the Taliban’s religious morality police deployed by the Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and the Promotion of Virtue—a much-feared institution during the group’s rule in the 1990s—have become more visible in the streets of the capital.

Efforts to police the population intensified ahead of Ramadan, which began Saturday. On a recent day in Kabul, religious police instructed taxi drivers not to play music inside the vehicle or to pick up intoxicated passengers or women who they deemed improperly covered.

On Friday, Taliban members hung banners in central Kabul reading: “My sister! Your hijab speaks louder than my blood.”

“Women should have better hijab for Ramadan,” said Abdullah Omari, a morality police chief overseeing seven central provinces.

“Hijab” is a catchall term that for many Muslims refers to a head scarf, which all Afghan women already wear in public. But the word can also refer more broadly to female clothing that covers parts or all of the body in accordance with Shariah law. The Taliban, Mr. Omari said, will enforce this broader view, saying the hijab is a religious code that mandates women cover their entire body in a loosefitting garment that ideally obscures the face as well, as burqas do.

For some women who still have active roles in society, the pressure of having to abide by the Taliban’s restrictive rules is unbearable. At Indira Gandhi’s Children’s Hospital in Kabul, a government letter

pinned to the notice board instructed female staff to wear Islamic clothing, without elaborating. Some female health workers there said they found the order humiliating.

“If we don’t wear a proper hijab, we may be fired,” said one female doctor who is her extended family’s sole breadwinner. She was wearing a tightly wrapped head scarf, a long dress over a pair of pants and a lab coat. “But I don’t know what that means. What kind of hijab do they want? We cannot work in a burqa,” she added, tears streaming down her face.

Last week the Taliban said that men and women must use Kabul’s parks, popular sites for family picnics, on alternate days. From the first day of Ramadan, the Taliban imposed similar segregation on amusement parks, making this past Friday the last day that parents could jointly take their children to ride carousels.

“I feel like, from tomorrow, I will be in prison,” said Sedarah Afzali, a 20-year-old high-school graduate wearing a tooth gem and a nose stud, nail polish and a bright orange head scarf. She has barely seen her girlfriends since the Taliban takeover because her family kept her from moving around the city alone for her safety.

“I begged my brothers today to take us here,” she said, gesturing at her two sisters, Neda, 23, and Nazi, 17, who were with her at the park. The Taliban takeover ended 20 years of war, Ms. Afzali said, but she preferred life under the former republic: “Back then, security wasn’t good but we could enjoy life. We had freedom.”

The Taliban say they are merely advising Afghans on how to behave and have yet to reinstate the widespread corporal punishment they used to rule the country in the 1990s. But fear of the group’s past leads many Afghans to self-censor and drives parents to do what they can to keep their children safe.

In a coffee shop in central Kabul, where she and two girlfriends were drinking energy drinks and smoking cigarettes, 25-year-old Fatima Hashemi said her family tried to keep her from going around town.

“This is the only place we can have a little bit of freedom,” Ms. Hashemi, a former journalist, said of the coffee shop. Her friend stubbed a cigarette on the floor, out of sight. “But we are too afraid to even enjoy this moment together.”

Until recently, men and women were allowed to mix in the cafe. Now, women have been relegated to a corner behind bamboo screens. Music has been turned off, the only soundtrack supplied by a customer’s iPhone playing a pop song. When Taliban morality enforcers enter the coffee shop, the usher sounds an alarm on the upper floors to give female patrons a chance to fix their headscarves or put out cigarettes.

Men feel the restrictions, too. Male government workers say the Taliban bar them from the office if they don’t grow long beards, while female staff have been told not to wear makeup.

Basset Zewari, a 23-year-old bitcoin trader wearing bluejeans and a red polo T-shirt, said the Taliban want men to wear traditional Afghan clothes—a long tunic and baggy trousers.

“My father told me today, ‘Be careful when you go outside in those jeans,’” Mr. Zewari said.

While women are allowed to study at university, male and female students must be taught in separate shifts or separated by partitions, according to the Ministry of Higher Education’s official guidelines viewed by The Wall Street Journal. Female students must take a seat in classrooms five minutes before male students and leave five minutes later, to ensure they don’t cross paths.

The restrictions also deal a blow to local businesses already suffering under a crushing economic crisis. Following the Taliban takeover, foreign countries including the U.S. imposed economic sanctions, halted foreign trade, suspended aid to the Afghan government and froze its foreign reserves.

	<p>“These parks depend on families and children. The new restrictions will stop most of our customers from coming here,” said the manager of an amusement park in Kabul.</p> <p>“All other Islamic countries have amusement parks,” he added. “Islam tells you to laugh and have fun. We have never allowed anyone to behave in an un-Islamic way here.”</p> <p>Saeed Jelani, a member of the Taliban’s police force visiting the amusement park on his day off, said it wasn’t forbidden in Islam to have fun, as long as women wore clothing that only revealed their eyes.</p> <p>“This is our Islamic rules and tradition: Women must stay inside the house,” Mr. Jelani said, as families milled around him eating ice cream, an hour before the park closed for the last time before genders would be segregated.</p> <p>“When men and women are close together, it leads to adultery and prostitution,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Americans on FBI watchlist: random checks
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/americans-fbi-watchlist-face-detention-extra-screenings-flying/story?id=83870081
GIST	<p>Already missing their flight to Canada, Zainab Merchant held her then 6-month-old baby inside a cold room in an airport in September of 2016 while she waited for her husband's screening to be over after her family was detained for a random security check by Transportation Security Administration agents.</p> <p>Merchant said her family was stopped for one reason; because she's Muslim.</p> <p>"At that moment, I honestly feared for us, because when I think the three-hour mark hit, you're just sitting there waiting," Merchant told ABC News. "We don't know what's going on with us. I just remember being very fearful about what was going on. It's a few officers and yourself, and nobody is there. No other person was there with us. So just [a] very lonely, cold, dark experience."</p> <p>Merchant, an American citizen, is among the many people on America's terrorist screening watchlist, a database containing information about individuals targeted as known or suspected of being involved in terrorist activities, according to the FBI.</p> <p>The watchlist was created in response to the Sept. 11 attacks, and since then, has collected over 1.6 million identities, according to the American Civil Liberties Union. There's no due process for people added to it, nor any official way to find out who has been added, according to human rights lawyers.</p> <p>The random security checks started happening more frequently after her first detainment, according to Merchant. Hourslong detentions, fear and extensive questioning have become a familiar experience for Merchant and her family when traveling.</p> <p>"[Since the Canada trip], we had always been detained, we'd always been questioned and it stopped being random when you knew that every time you travel, my entire family, including the children, were asked to step aside, escorted by the TSA officers," she said. "It just ended up becoming this traumatic thing for us to ever fly again."</p> <p>Unlike the "no-fly" list, the watchlist still allows people to fly. They are, however, subject to extra security, extensive questioning and hourslong detentions when flying or crossing the border.</p> <p>Merchant said she was not aware she was added to the watchlist until the screenings and processes became even more frequent, and she knew that, regardless of where they were headed, the whole family would be pulled aside.</p>

She said that even her three small children were being targeted and taken away from them during the screening process.

"They were being treated as criminals, no matter how little they were. It wasn't just my husband and I. They were also screening these little children," she said.

"I remember just guiding them through it and teaching them ... 'this is what's going to happen. You have to cooperate, smile, just be friendly.' Imagine teaching a young toddler this way; you don't even know how toddlers are going to react."

Such screenings would happen whenever the family traveled, Merchant says, but the situation became even more intense when the FBI allegedly contacted her with a proposal.

A few months after that initial detention, Merchant was allegedly contacted by FBI agents seeking information about her mosque and community. She said they offered a chance to be removed from the list if she agreed to be an informant.

"I said, 'absolutely not. You know, I'm a mom. I'm not a spy. I don't care if I'm going to be on this [a long time]. I'm just not going to do this,'" Merchant said.

In response to an ABC News request for comment, the FBI said the Terrorist Screening Center could neither deny nor confirm whether an individual is on the watchlist.

After the conversation, Merchant said the situation got progressively worse.

"There was a time when they took my laptop and they released the whole bomb squad on me at the airport. There was a time when dogs were unleashed on me. They took out a whole team of dogs to search me," Merchant said.

The most traumatic and humiliating experience for Merchant, however, was at the Boston Logan International Airport – when she said she had her period and the TSA officers forced her to remove her pants during a private screening.

"That day, they were trying to strip me of my dignity when they didn't believe that I was on my period. Even though I went on through the scan, everything was clear," she said.

"I said my final prayers as a Muslim ... I had nowhere [to go], no one to call and no one to say anything to stop feeling of utter helplessness. I was ready to die. They removed my pants and they saw the blood everywhere. And they quickly just scurried out of the closet."

Merchant, however, is not the only one. Many others are on the watchlist without knowing the reason behind it.

Abdulkadir Nur, who goes by Eno, is a 69-year-old U.S. citizen from Somalia who said he is also on the watchlist.

Nur travels often due to his humanitarian work with the United Nations, but every time he leaves the country, he said he undergoes extensive questioning and screening.

"You know, when I fly worldwide, I've never had any problems," Nur said. "Actually, I'm being respected and welcomed everywhere. But when I'm coming to my country, the U.S., I feel like I'm [a] criminal."

While the TSA says a typical enhanced screening process takes 10 to 15 minutes, both Nur and Merchant said they had to miss multiple flights due to secondary questioning at airports.

	<p>With all of the challenges faced, Nur has filed a lawsuit against the FBI with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Muslim civil rights group, in hopes to have his name removed from the watch list. The process, if successful, could take years, according to his lawyer.</p> <p>Merchant says she was able to get her name off the list after she confronted TSA and FBI officers during a closed-door meeting she was invited to in Orlando in 2018.</p> <p>Now, Merchant hopes to use her experience to help others and shine a light on the issue.</p> <p>"I don't fear this anymore," she said. "It built me up to be that voice for people who don't have any. Even though I might be off the system, I am not really free until every one of them gets justice."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 New video AQ leader Ayman Zawahiri
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10689071/Al-Qaeda-leader-Ayman-al-Zawahiri-ALIVE.html
GIST	<p>Osama bin Laden's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri has appeared in a new video in which he denounced the 'enemies of Islam' after a school in India banned the wearing of the hijab.</p> <p>In a nine-minute video released by As-Sahab Media, Al-Qaeda's official media wing, al-Zawahiri praised Muslim student Muskan Khan after she wore the Islamic scarf at a school in Karnataka state, governed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).</p> <p>According to translations provided by counter-terror experts on Twitter, including the SITE Intelligence Group that monitors jihadist websites, the Egyptian-born doctor accused 'the pagan Hindu democracy of India' of seeking to 'oppress Muslims'.</p> <p>Al-Zawahiri, who took over al-Qaeda after Bin Laden's death in 2011, also decried France, Holland, and Switzerland, as well as Egypt and Morocco, as 'enemies of Islam' for their anti-hijab policies.</p> <p>He further criticised the governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh, accusing them of defending 'the very enemies that have empowered them to fight us'.</p> <p>Karnataka's hijab row began in January when a government-run school in the state's Udupi district barred students wearing hijabs from entering classrooms, triggering protests by Muslims and counter-protests by Hindu students.</p> <p>More schools and colleges in the state followed with similar bans and the state's top court disallowed students from wearing the hijab until it delivered a verdict.</p> <p>An Indian court recently upheld a ban on the hijab in class in Karnataka after students who challenged the ban in court claimed wearing the hijab was a fundamental right guaranteed under India's constitution and an essential practice of Islam.</p> <p>In India, the hijab has historically been neither banned nor limited in public spheres.</p> <p>Al-Zawahiri last appeared in a video last year marking the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, months after rumours spread that he was dead.</p> <p>In that video, he proclaimed 'Jerusalem will never be Judaized' and praised al-Qaeda attacks – including one that targeted Russian troops in Syria in January 2021. SITE said al-Zawahiri also noted the US military's withdrawal from Afghanistan 20 years after the invasion.</p> <p>In recent years, al-Qaeda has faced competition in jihadi circles from its rival, the Islamic State group. IS rose to prominence by seizing large swaths of Iraq and Syria in 2014, declaring a 'caliphate' and extending affiliates to multiple countries across the region.</p>

	<p>IS's physical 'caliphate' was crushed in Iraq and Syria, though its militants are still active and carrying out attacks.</p> <p>Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the shadowy leader of IS, was killed by US special forces in a raid in northwestern Syria in October 2019.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Uganda militia claims attack eastern Congo
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/suspected-islamists-kill-21-civilians-eastern-congo-2022-04-04/
GIST	<p>BENI, Democratic Republic of Congo, April 4 (Reuters) - Suspected Islamist militants killed at least 21 civilians in an overnight attack on a village in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a local human rights group and a witness said on Monday.</p> <p>Fighters believed to be from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) attacked the village of Masambo on Sunday night, said Ricardo Rupande, president of the group, the Ruenzori Sector Civil Society.</p> <p>The village is about 40 km (25 miles) east of the city of Beni in the Ruenzori district.</p> <p>The ADF is a Ugandan militia that has been active in eastern Congo since the 1990s. It has been blamed for thousands of deaths since a resurgence in 2013, many in middle-of-the-night massacres carried out with machetes and hatchets.</p> <p>"It is a miracle I survived. We were already in bed when we heard the sound of boots outside and bullets. It was after hearing victims' cries that we realized it was a rebel raid," said Kakule Saanane, a resident of Masambo.</p> <p>He and Rupande both said 21 dead bodies had been found so far but that the number of deaths could rise.</p> <p>Congolese army spokesman Antony Mwalushayi said the army would issue a statement after it had finished its security assessment of the zone.</p> <p>Uganda sent more than 1,000 troops to Congo in December to undertake joint operations against the ADF.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/05 Seattle City Hall Park remains closed
SOURCE	https://thepostmillennial.com/seattles-city-hall-park-remains-closed-after-costly-damage-from-homeless-encampment
GIST	<p>Since last August, Courthouse Park, also known as City Hall Park in Seattle has remained closed following the clearing of a notorious homeless encampment whose occupants were responsible for multiple violent crimes.</p> <p>The city originally said that the park would be closed for 2-3 months, but more than seven months later, the park remains fenced off and closed. On Monday, Seattle Parks and Rec. told <i>The Post Millennial</i>, that the re-opening was being delayed another 60 days due to "seeding" and "rat abatement." However, the park is overgrown and no work has been seen at the property for weeks.</p> <p>Seattle Parks and Rec. communications manager Rachel Schulkin said City Hall Park would remain "...closed to the public at least through April 5. As we approach that date we will determine if an extension is needed. We have been doing restoration to the park, and will continue into the spring." It is still closed.</p>

In a follow up exchange, The Post Millennial learned that the damage to the park was extensive and costly to repair. According to Schulkin, repairs included; rodent abatement and ongoing rodent control, replacing an electrical cabinet, pressure washing sidewalks, grading soil, hydroseeding to replace grass, and tree trimming as well as leaf and litter removal.

The city spent the restoration time working with Seattle City Light to improve electrical service to park and re-orienting installed fencing to create a bike lane for 3/4 of a block through the park along Dilling Way.

The work itself cost taxpayers over \$33,000 dollars, which included more than \$13,000 of electrical work, \$3,000 for fencing and \$2,000 for security.

However according to Schulkin, "...there is a lot of other work overlapping (like the daily regular trash and grounds maintenance to the park that isn't related to the restoration work). So I'd consider what I provided a snapshot of some of the costs incurred in the restoration of City Hall Park, there is likely more than this but its not easily untangled from other work."

Due to the proximity to the King County Courthouse next door King County Sheriff's deputies have a constant presence.

Throughout the seven-month restoration, more vandalism to the site has occurred as many former residents of the encampment did not go far and set up tents on nearby streets. Some even came back and pitched tents next to the fencing for several days before being removed. Most made their new home under a nearby overpass for months before that eventually was cleared as well.

Neighbors of the park told *The Post Millennial* that they have not seen any work being done in months even though the fencing has remained. One neighbor said, "I see the same people around that were in the encampment. All they did was set up camp a block away. I think the city has left the fences up because they are afraid that if they take them down the campers will come back."

The Post Millennial previously reported that due to violence in the encampment, the Seattle Police Department implemented new policies where officers would be required to assist Seattle Fire with a [Rescue Task Force](#) when life-threatening emergencies happened within the park.

The crime got so bad that employees at the Courthouse marched in protest of the encampment and the city's refusal to address their safety concerns. Workers at the Courthouse were repeatedly attacked by those living in the encampment. The situation came to a tragic climax after a female employee [was attacked and sexually assaulted](#) by a homeless, [prolific offender](#) inside the bathroom at the Courthouse.

The encampment was a hotspot for homicides, shootings, stabbings, and assaults. In May 2021, a homeless man with multiple prior arrests kicked a [67-year-old man's dog to death](#) during an attempted robbery in the park. The man was released from jail on his own recognizance the next day due to Seattle's criminal justice policies.

In December, having lost confidence in Seattle officials' ability to safely operate the park, the King County Council [approved a deal](#) that would transfer the park to the county. However, the park has since remained under Seattle's control.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Weather forecasters face loss of data
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/climate/weather-forecast-data.html
GIST	The National Weather Service has cut back on weather balloon launches at some of its sites because of shortages of hydrogen and helium used to lift them, potentially affecting forecasts and weather and climate research.

The cutbacks, coupled with the closing of a launch site on Cape Cod last year that has yet to reopen, could especially affect forecasting in the New York-New England area, some scientists said.

The agency said it would use data from balloons launched at nearby sites and from its other sources, including ground-based sensors, satellites and commercial airliners. While balloons have certain advantages, including the ability to make observations up to a height of about 20 miles, "This temporary adjustment will not impact weather forecasts and warnings," the agency said in announcing the cutbacks last week.

But Troy Kimmel, a meteorologist in Austin, Texas, and a lecturer at the University of Texas there, said any reduction in observations was concerning. "It's very important in our atmospheric modeling to be able to have this information," he said.

"We can't go back and get that data," said Sandra Yuter, a professor at North Carolina State University and an expert on remote sensing of meteorological data. "We're going to have big gaps."

Dr. Yuter said the cutbacks showed that the weather service was not placing high enough priority on weather balloons, which have been a staple of the agency's observations for nearly a century.

The gas shortages are a solvable problem, she said: "If you consider something important then you solve the problem."

Susan Buchanan, a spokeswoman for the National Weather Service, said, "We take this situation seriously and are pursuing all avenues to resolve it."

"The upper air observing program remains a key contributor to our analyses, model data assimilation, and for our forecasters' situational awareness," she said.

Weather balloons, which are about 5 feet in diameter when launched, carry a small, expendable package of instruments called a radiosonde that transmits data on temperature, pressure and relative humidity as the balloon rises into the upper atmosphere. The balloon eventually bursts and the radiosonde descends by parachute to the ground, where it can be recovered and reused.

Balloons are used around the world and are usually launched at specific times twice daily, 12 hours apart. The data is fed into computer models that provide short- and longer-term weather forecasts, and also becomes part of large long-term databases used in weather and climate research.

The weather service announced on March 29 that, effective immediately, flights from nine of its 101 launch sites in the United States and the Caribbean would be reduced "due to a global supply chain disruption of helium and a temporary issue with the contract of one hydrogen supplier." The agency said it expected additional sites would be affected.

The helium market has been affected this year by problems at the main domestic source, in Amarillo, Texas, and by a fire in January at a major new plant in Russia.

The affected sites are all in the East, from Tallahassee, Fla., north to Buffalo and Albany in New York. Five use helium and four use hydrogen. Flights would be reduced to one a day and eliminated completely on days with good weather, in order to conserve gas for launches during hazardous weather, the service said.

On Monday Ms. Buchanan said helium had been delivered to one site, in Greensboro, N.C., and a full launch schedule had been resumed. But some of the other affected sites had or would soon completely run out of gas, she said. The issue with the hydrogen supplier had been resolved, but it was unclear when deliveries of the gas would resume.

By measuring conditions through the air column, radiosondes provide information that is crucial to understanding and forecasting the evolution of storm systems. Even if the weather is calm, collecting that data could be important, Mr. Kimmel said.

“Who’s to say that that calm weather pattern is not going to affect what they forecast for other places?” he said.

Dr. Yuter said that balloon data helps scientists understand the structure of the atmosphere and “feeds into our understanding of what will happen as the climate changes.”

One of the affected helium sites is in Upton, N.Y., on Long Island. It is the closest launch site to New York City, which is about 50 miles to the west.

The weather service was forced to close its station in Chatham, Mass., on Cape Cod, in March 2021 because of erosion. The agency is working to select a site for a new station as soon as possible, Ms. Buchanan said.

Without Upton and Chatham, a large stretch of the Eastern Seaboard, from Wallops Island, Va., to Portland, Maine, is not covered by balloon launches.

Adam Sobel, an atmospheric scientist at Columbia University, said that while the weather service was facing a “tough situation,” he did not think their statement that there would be no impact on forecasts was credible.

“The N.W.S. claim that the loss of several radiosonde stations in a high-population region has no impact on the forecast was accompanied by no supporting evidence,” he said.

The weather service faced another disruption in its data gathering ability in recent years. Around the world, commercial jets routinely and automatically provide weather data to the weather service and similar agencies in other countries. During the first months of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, with air travel reduced by about 75 percent, those observations fell by about the same amount.

A study by scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found that the loss of data affected the quality of one of its weather forecasting models.

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HEADLINE	04/05 New meatless meat made from air
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/meatless-meat-air-protein/
GIST	<p>San Mateo, California — A California startup is doing its part to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions by creating a new kind of "meat" that's made from air.</p> <p>CBS News was given an exclusive sneak peak at a product that physicist Lisa Dyson says has the taste and texture of meat, but does not come from animals. It's created using a fermentation process, similar to making yogurt. But instead of using microbes that consume milk and sugar, it's made from microbes that eat oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide.</p> <p>How does it work?</p> <p>"You start out with cultures," Dyson, the founder and CEO of Air Protein, told CBS News. "Then you feed it elements of the air and it grows and grows and grows just like that yogurt culture. You dry that and you get to a protein rich flour."</p> <p>The flour is processed to mimic chicken, seafood or beef.</p> <p>"We can grow enough material to make a steak in a matter of hours," Dyson said.</p>

	<p>The concept behind Air Protein was inspired by NASA, which explored in the 1960s and 70s a way to recycle carbon dioxide exhaled by astronauts and turn it into food. Dyson is now using the technology to help fight climate change.</p> <p>"The food industry today produces more greenhouse gases than the entire transportation sector. What's going to happen when we have 10 billion people?" she said.</p> <p>The innovation is the latest in the alternative meat market, which could reach \$140 billion by the end of the decade, according to Barclays 2019 Annual Report. The industry has become more competitive as companies try to improve on taste.</p> <p>Air Chicken is expected to hit store shelves sometime next year, pending approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.</p> <p>For now, we'll have to take Dyson at her word that it tastes like meat because only a small circle of people, including investors, have tried it.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	04/05 LAPD delay medical aid after shootings?
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-04-05/lapd-officers-medical-aid-shootings
GIST	<p>By the time a group of Los Angeles police officers cautiously approached Rosendo Olivio Jr. with guns drawn, more than six minutes had passed since they'd shot him.</p> <p>Officers had confronted Olivio on a porch as the 34-year-old, seemingly in the grips of a mental crisis, held up a small knife and claimed to have doused the building behind him in gasoline, according to video from cameras worn by the officers. When he moved forward, imploring the officers to shoot, they did.</p> <p>Olivio turned away and crumpled facedown on the steps. Officers screamed at him to "drop the knife!"</p> <p>Blood pooled beneath Olivio as the minutes ticked by. Eventually, about 10 officers approached, their weapons trained on his motionless body. Two of them grabbed Olivio by the ankles and dragged him down the stairs. The knife fell from his hand as his face bounced off the last step.</p> <p>They pulled his arms behind his back, handcuffing him. Video shot by a witness captured four officers carrying him through the street by his arms and legs. Paramedics later pronounced him dead.</p> <p>The incident was a stark example of how LAPD officers — like police around the country — are trained to view people they've just shot as ongoing threats. The result is that officers routinely wait several minutes before approaching those suspects, then focus on handcuffing and searching them, often delaying medical attention or taking no steps to give any until paramedics arrive, a Times review of nearly 50 LAPD shootings and hours of associated video found.</p> <p>Officers who did not provide aid — pressure on the wound, CPR or other measures — after some shootings were not punished, despite a department policy requiring them to assist those injured if they are able, according to the review. LAPD officials determined instead that discussions about the lapses and retraining on the department's policies were preferable.</p> <p>Police officials say that officers must ensure their own safety when dealing with potentially dangerous suspects, and that doing so can take time depending on the circumstances of each encounter. Officers say they sometimes fear making a person's injuries worse if they try to intervene.</p>

But Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, which advises police departments on policy matters nationwide, said rendering aid after shootings should be a “guiding principle” for police departments not only because it can save lives, but also for the impact it can have on the public’s perception of police.

“Part of being a professional cop today means being able ... to quickly pivot and recognize that you have a responsibility, if your department really believes in the sanctity of human life, to do everything humanly possible to get that person aid immediately,” Wexler said.

LAPD officials often spend a year investigating shootings by officers, analyzing second by second an officer’s actions in the moments leading up to the shooting and each pull of the trigger. Less attention is paid, however, to the minutes after the shooting, The Times found.

The Times had access to videos recorded by officers’ body-worn cameras or surveillance cameras in all but one of the 47 shootings in which LAPD officers struck someone since the start of 2020. The Times also reviewed detailed LAPD investigative reports available for 25 of the shootings.

All the videos were edited by the department before they were released and often excluded portions of time during the encounters. However, they usually captured and included time stamps for when the officers opened fire and when they handcuffed the person they’d shot.

In some cases where officers fired on a suspect at close range, they had the person in handcuffs within seconds. In other cases in which officers feared the person might still be armed, according to available video, they didn’t approach them for more than 10 minutes.

On average, 3 minutes and 40 seconds passed before officers reached the person they had shot in the 39 shootings in which it was possible to time their response, The Times found.

The suspect appeared to be unconscious by the time police reached them in 22 of the shootings, and was at least partially incapacitated in the rest, the videos show. And in all but one of the shootings, the person was handcuffed after being turned over onto their chest or moved in other ways that experts say could have exacerbated their injuries, video showed. In some cases, they were then left facedown or simply held on their side for several more minutes as officers waited for paramedics, The Times found.

In one video, LAPD officers shot a man holding a knife, then Tasered him as he laid on the ground in an attempt to make his arm jerk farther away from the dropped blade.

“Don’t move!” an officer screamed at the man, who was not moving.

In another incident, a team of officers trailed a mentally ill man who was holding a hammer for several blocks through Westlake before surrounding him with their guns drawn. When the man, Samuel Ponce, threw the hammer in the officers’ direction and then raised another object in his hand, one of the officers shot him in the head.

After Ponce was shot, officers left him on the ground without providing care for more than four minutes, until they were ordered to start chest compressions.

An edited compilation of body-camera videos the LAPD released showed Ponce throwing the hammer and getting shot in slow motion, then cut to a supervisor instructing officers to start performing CPR — giving the impression the aid was swift.

A report on the shooting released months later gave a fuller account of what happened. Officers first handcuffed Ponce and rolled him onto his side to search him for weapons, and one officer poked him in the back, saying, “Hey, amigo.” No one checked his pulse or whether he was breathing, the report noted. The officers then left him facedown on the ground for nearly two minutes. After eventually checking him for injuries, they again left him on the ground without tending to him.

The officers didn't start chest compressions until ordered to do so more than four minutes after the shooting.

One of the officers later explained his thinking to investigators. "I don't want to just start doing, let's say, like just random chest compressions if we don't see where exactly he was hit and where he was injured, because you don't want to just make the injury worse," he said, according to the report. "So, we roll him over just so he can get better oxygen. I don't know if at that point somebody did see where he was shot or try to put pressure on it, but compressions were started."

While the officer's decision to shoot Ponce was found to be justified, LAPD Chief Michel Moore ruled the officers had not properly cared for him afterward. In an internal report on the shooting, Moore wrote that his "expectation is that they would have kept Ponce in a recovery position after he was handcuffed, holding him in place if necessary, before initiating CPR." Moore was referring to turning a person on their side to help keep their airway open.

Moore directed supervisors to discuss Ponce's treatment after the shooting with the officers, but did not recommend they be punished.

In its review, The Times found that detailed protocols related to officer safety were consistently followed after shootings, while the department's more vague mandate to render aid was not.

Crucial minutes

After someone is shot, "time is really of the essence," said Dr. Kenji Inaba, chief of trauma and surgical critical care at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center. "There are limited but effective things that can be done in the field, and the sooner they can be done in these specific situations, the better off the patient will be."

Inaba, a reserve LAPD officer and the department's chief surgeon, consults on the care for injured officers and advises the LAPD on medical training for officers. He also helps lead the Stop the Bleed campaign, a national initiative teaching first responders the importance of stopping blood loss for gunshot victims in the field.

Wounds from handguns — which account for the vast majority of shootings by police and others in Los Angeles — are typically best treated in the field by putting immediate, direct pressure on the wound, Inaba said. Applying a tourniquet and applying pressure, part of officers' training, or packing the wound with gauze or cloth could also help in some situations, he added.

Luann Pannell, the LAPD's director of police training and education, said that in line with state law, all police recruits receive more than 20 hours of first aid and CPR training, "to be able to provide a basic medical response until emergency medical services can arrive on scene."

All officers are also issued a trauma kit and those working patrol assignments must get refresher training on CPR and the use of defibrillators every two years, Pannell said.

The fact that ambulances often arrive at shooting scenes quickly in L.A. does not mean police do not need to treat someone after a shooting, Inaba said. People can die from blood loss within minutes, he said, and for those who survive, blood loss complicates their treatment and recovery.

Policy vs. practice

Under the LAPD's use of force policy, officers are expected to "render aid" to people they have shot "to the extent of the officer's training and experience" and "to the level of equipment available," including by using basic first aid, CPR or automated defibrillators.

The policy, however, does not specify what steps officers must take to comply with the order. The vague wording has allowed police officers to respond in vastly different ways after shootings, and police officials

to judge those actions differently from case to case, internal LAPD reports on police shootings and videos showed.

Officers initiated chest compressions a handful of times, including one who, after detecting a faint pulse in a woman who had just been shot, revived her on a sidewalk before paramedics arrived.

In other cases, however, officers appeared to do little other than place the person who was shot on their side, without applying pressure to their bullet wounds or providing any other direct medical care.

Officers were found to have acted appropriately in some cases simply by calling for an ambulance. In other cases, including the shooting of Ponce, it was determined that officers did not do enough to help someone they shot, but they were not disciplined.

On the same day Ponce was shot in March 2021, a man named Nathan Glover crashed a car into a home during a police pursuit and then was shot by an officer who said he saw Glover holding a gun as he jumped from the vehicle. A gun was recovered at the scene.

Video released by the department showed the officers screaming at Glover not to move as he moaned in a patch of grass at the side of the home.

“I’m dying,” Glover said.

“The ambulance is coming, man. Relax,” one of the officers replied, before the officers moved forward and handcuffed Glover behind his back.

According to a later investigative report, Glover was then left on his chest for almost five minutes as the officers waited for paramedics. One of the officers told investigators that “he did not want to place Glover in a seated or recovery position as he did not know if Glover had suffered a lower-body or back injury.”

After Glover was shot, he was pulled from the grass and left on his chest without care for almost five minutes, until paramedics arrived.

Moore later found that the officers had broken policy for failing to do more. But rather than recommend they face some punishment, he opted again to make the poor medical response “a topic of discussion.”

Wexler said that it can be difficult for officers to suddenly start treating a threatening suspect as a victim in need of care, and that peer pressure among officers to continue treating suspects as threats can be strong. Those challenges, he said, make it more important for departments to train officers well on the rules — and then enforce them.

“This shouldn’t be left to the judgment of the officers to decide what ‘rendering aid’ means and under what circumstances” it is required, Wexler said. “To make rendering aid real, I think you have to put a lot into it. It can’t simply be an empty slogan.”

While there is no policy requiring officers to handcuff a person they shoot, they are taught to approach suspects carefully, often as a group with shields and weapons at the ready. Officers are also expected to formulate a plan for who in the group will handcuff and search the suspect, the department said.

Even when a person “appears to be incapacitated, the fear of the suspect re-arming himself, or even gaining consciousness and continuing hostile actions remains a possibility,” the department said in the statement.

In the more than 40 police shootings reviewed by The Times, none involved a person regaining consciousness or suddenly reaching for a weapon after being shot. Most who were conscious complied with officers’ orders, while a few resisted being handcuffed.

Some medical and policing experts faulted the LAPD — and police departments generally — for failing to properly train officers on how to treat those they’ve just shot and to instill in them a sense of duty to try to save their lives.

“It’s not the ethos,” said Christy Lopez, a Georgetown Law professor and former deputy chief in the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. And that “signals something really corrosive to community members.”

The message is particularly acute for family members of people who have been shot by the police.

“They could have been more careful with him. They could have respected his body. But they didn’t do none of that,” said a relative of Olivio, who requested anonymity for fear the police would retaliate against her for speaking out. “They treated him like an animal, and he wasn’t an animal. He was a human being.”

The LAPD, which is still investigating Olivio’s shooting, has not identified all of the officers involved, but has named the two who opened fire: Faviola Salinas and Kyle Locke.

David Winslow, an attorney for Salinas and Locke, declined to make the officers available for questions from The Times, but said that they had followed their training in a difficult situation.

Winslow alleged that Olivio was a gang member in gang territory, and that a hostile crowd of people had gathered after the shooting — increasing the risk to officers and complicating the medical response, in part because paramedics “did not want to go near that apartment.”

And while Olivio may have been unconscious, the officers couldn’t be sure, Winslow said.

At Olivio’s viewing at the Funeraria Latino Americana in East L.A. in January, mourners could still see the wounds to his forehead, nose and lip from when his face bounced off the steps the day he died.

They were still there despite the mortician’s makeup and his mother’s attempts to hide them.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Ecuador prison riot: 20 inmates killed
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/4awmaq/20-inmates-killed-ecuador-prison-riot
GIST	<p>Yet another bloodbath has rocked an Ecuadorian prison, killing at least 20 people. Some were reportedly decapitated, according to local news reports.</p> <p>The latest slaughter happened on March 3 inside the Liberty Deprivation Center N. 1, also known as the Turi prison, in the city of Cuenca, the country’s third largest city and an expat haven.</p> <p>Prison massacres have become commonplace in Ecuador, with at least 316 people killed in 2021 in eight separate clashes. The insecurity inside the prisons echoes the insecurity outside. A bloody drug war has led to a soaring homicide rate, and criminal groups have begun hanging dead bodies from bridges, emulating one of the bloodiest tactics of Mexico’s violent cartels.</p> <p>The number of murders in Ecuador rose more than 80 percent last year, to 2,494, up from 1,371 in 2020, according to statistics from the Government Ministry.</p> <p>Gunshots were first heard around 1:30 a.m. on March 3 inside the Turi prison, according to local news reports. The prison holds around 1,700 inmates and is a stronghold of Los Lobos, or The Wolves, one of Ecuador’s most powerful gangs. Authorities attributed the riot to an internal dispute within Los Lobos.</p> <p>At around 4 a.m., the government deployed the National Police and Armed Forces to try and shore up security. That didn’t seem to work, and some five hours later the Air Force deployed planes to send more police officers to support the 800 agents who were in the prison trying to control the situation, according to Ecuadorian news outlet GK. Police threw tear gas bombs while inmates ran onto the roofs seeking safety. In</p>

a [video](#) taken from outside the prison, inmates could be heard yelling inside for help and pleading to be let out.

“The attacks were carried out by mafias that do not want to submit to control,” said Ecuador’s Minister of the Interior, Patricio Carrillo, who was appointed to the post less than a week earlier. Carrillo said authorities found extensive “ballistic evidence” in the prison indicating the use of five types of guns, many of which had been hidden in the prison walls and floor.

Carillo said President Guillermo Lasso ordered La Roca maximum security prison in Guayaquil —closed in 2013— be reopened in order to house five gang leaders accused of orchestrating the massacre. A former high-ranking prison official once [boasted that inmates at La Roca are locked up for 23 hours a day](#) and prevented from having any communication with the outside world.

Lasso, a conservative who took office in May, [declared a state of emergency](#) in October and ordered troops onto the streets to address the violence. Under the executive order, authorities were given the power to restrict freedom of movement and gatherings.

The [Interamerican Commission on Human Rights warned](#) in a February 2022 report that Ecuador is plagued by “unprecedented levels of violence and corruption within the prisons, caused by the state’s abandonment of the penitentiary system years ago.” It criticized the government for adopting a policy that “favors incarceration” for almost all security problems, resulting in an “exponential increase in incarceration” in recent years.

Most of the inmates killed in last year’s prison massacres were young people accused of committing minor offenses; some had already been cleared for release, according to the commission. It found that the most dangerous prisons are effectively run by gangs with ties to international crime groups, who charge inmates exorbitant prices to sleep on beds. Authorities and gang leaders alike possess keys to the prison wings, the commission found.

The Turi prison has seen massacres before - in February 2021, [34 people died in a prison riot](#). Clashes broke out across prisons in three cities the same day, killing a total of 79 people. Soon after, prison authorities identified widespread security breaches within the Turi facility, according to GK. Among other things, body scanners didn’t work, the vehicle scanner was damaged, and the prison’s camera system wasn’t active. It’s unclear if they had been fixed before this week’s violence.

Ecuador is a prominent drug trans-shipment point and it borders coca-producing countries Colombia and Peru. With record amounts of cocaine coming through from Colombia [for transportation via the country’s huge port system](#) to either the U.S or Europe, gangs are believed to be fighting for control of the drug trade. Authorities have said [criminal gangs with ties to Mexican drug cartels](#) have also started operating in the country, possibly fueling the escalation in violence.

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HEADLINE	04/05 El Salvador in unprecedented crackdown
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/apr/05/el-salvador-crackdown-ms13-state-of-emergency
GIST	<p>Distraught families across El Salvador are searching for information on the fate of their loved ones after almost 6,000 people were arrested in an unprecedented security crackdown over the past week.</p> <p>Men, women and children have been rounded up across the Central American country since the government declared a state of emergency on 27 March, suspending constitutional rights including the presumption of innocence.</p> <p>President Nayib Bukele, an authoritarian populist who uses Twitter to announce policies and denounce his enemies, has said that the detainees are all gang members and that they will not be released.</p>

The state of emergency was declared after three days of violence left 87 dead, which Bukele blamed on the Mara Salvatrucha gang known as MS-13.

While the police claim to have captured the MS-13 leaders who ordered the killings, there is mounting evidence that ordinary people who live or work in gang-dominated neighbourhoods have been arrested arbitrarily.

In the capital, San Salvador, hundreds of wives and mothers have been gathering outside a navy base that houses one of the largest police holding cells. Vans loaded with handcuffed detainees arrived throughout the week as members of an evangelical church handed out small cups of sherbet to tearful relatives camped out in the baking sun.

Carmen Rodríguez, 33, does not know why her husband, brother and nephew were arrested a week ago while unloading a truck of secondhand clothes for their business at the city's main market in the historic quarter.

"When we asked the police why they were taking them, they just insulted us," said Rodríguez, who is struggling to find the money to pay for their meals. "They are taking the righteous for sinners. It is good for the police to do their job, but it is unfair that they also take away working people – and even worse that they treat them like animals," she said.

Last week Bukele announced on Twitter that food for gang inmates would be rationed to feed the new detainees as he wasn't prepared to take money from the education budget to feed "terrorists".

The 30-day state of emergency allows detainees to be held for 15 days – rather than the usual three – without access to a defence attorney and without prosecutors having to make a case in front of a judge. The decree, which also allows police to search cellphones and messages, could be extended.

The national assembly, which is controlled by Bukele's allies, also passed legislation increasing jail terms for juveniles and allowed indefinite pre-trial detention for suspected gang members.

Zaira Navas, a lawyer at the Salvadoran human rights group Cristosal, said: "The detainees have lost their right to defence and do not have the right to know the reasons for their arrest."

Despite the wide scope of the new emergency powers, reports suggest that other constitutional rights are also being violated.

Rosa López said police forced their way into her house in Santa Tecla in the La Libertad region on Saturday 26 March and arrested her 20-year-old cousin who suffers from a heart condition. He should have been assigned a lawyer and appeared in court after three days as he was arrested a day before the state of emergency, but he remains incommunicado.

"The police didn't ask, they just entered the house and took him away. They were crazy that day, capturing everyone ... It is terrible what they are doing to him and to us. It is not only unfair but it is also illegal," said López, 26.

The crackdown is popular with many voters who are fed up with the gangs, but has led to the lockdown of entire neighbourhoods.

At a military checkpoint one afternoon last week in Santa Tecla, soldiers armed with AK-47s examined vehicles and checked people's identity cards and proof of address before letting them in or out of the neighbourhood. Anyone regarded as suspicious was forced to strip, so troops could check for gang-related tattoos.

Only those deemed to have a legitimate reason to be out and about could pass.

“Builders and informal workers can’t leave. They are locked up, prisoners. Luckily I have a formal job and [my employer] has issued a letter. But if we want to go out shopping after work we can’t. There is nothing we can do,” said a 35-year-old woman who preferred not to give her name.

Astrid Valencia, Central America researcher at Amnesty International, said: “We are alarmed not only that the measures suspend fundamental elements of due process, but also by President Bukele’s confrontational discourse, which stigmatises and attacks human rights defenders, civil society organisations, international NGOs and independent media for expressing their concerns about those measures.”

Bukele has taken an increasingly combative stance with anyone daring to question his government, and recently claimed that human rights NGOs, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights and George Soros’s Open Society Foundations – which provides grants to NGOs and independent media in El Salvador – are gang associates.

Even before the mass arrests, El Salvador had one of the most overcrowded prison systems in the world, with about a quarter of detainees being held in pre-trial detention.

While mayor of San Salvador, Bukele claimed to support socially driven crime prevention and rehabilitation programs to tackle the country’s intractable gang violence. Since coming into power in 2019, he has reverted to the same mano dura or repressive tactics of previous governments, while at the same time secretly negotiating a truce with gang leaders, according to the US.

Bukele denies the allegations, but the telephones of journalists reporting on the negotiated truce were hacked using Israeli spyware.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Sacramento police arrest 2nd suspect
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/05/sacramento-police-second-suspect-mass-shooting
GIST	<p>Police in Sacramento arrested a second person in connection with Sunday’s mass shooting in a bustling stretch of California’s capitol. Six people were killed in the shooting and at least 12 were injured.</p> <p>On Tuesday the department announced Smiley Martin, who was also injured in the shooting, would be booked in Sacramento’s county jail once his medical care is complete. Martin, 27, is facing charges of possession of a firearm by a prohibited person and possession of a machine gun. His brother Dandrae Martin, 26, was arrested on Monday and charged with assault and illegal firearm possession offenses.</p> <p>Neither have been charged with homicide as police say they are continuing to comb through hundreds of pieces of physical evidence as well as video footage and photos.</p> <p>Detectives also were trying to determine if a stolen handgun found at the crime scene was connected to the shooting. The handgun was inspected and was converted to a weapon capable of automatic gunfire, authorities have said.</p> <p>More than 100 shots were fired early on Sunday in downtown Sacramento, creating a chaotic scene with hundreds trying desperately to get to safety. A day later police announced the arrest of Dandrae Martin as a “related suspect” on charges of assault with a deadly weapon and being a convict carrying a loaded gun. A court appearance was set for Tuesday.</p> <p>Detectives and Swat team members found one handgun during searches of three homes. The three women and three men killed were identified on Monday.</p> <p>The Sacramento county coroner identified the women killed as Johntaya Alexander, 21; Melinda Davis, 57; and Yamile Martinez-Andrade, 21. The three men were Sergio Harris, 38; Joshua Hoye-Lucchesi, 32; and De’vazia Turner, 29.</p>

The Sacramento mayor, Darrell Steinberg, read their names during a vigil on Monday evening attended by grieving relatives, friends and community members.

Turner, who had three daughters and a son, was a “protector” who worked as the night manager at an inventory company, his mother, Penelope Scott, told the Associated Press. He rarely went out, and she had no reason to believe he would be in harm’s way when he left her house after he visited Saturday night.

“I want people to know he is a great person and he loved his family,” Scott told KCRA, Sacramento’s NBC affiliate. “You took away somebody that meant a whole lot to a whole lot of community people. Our Facebook ... everything is flooded with love.”

Turner’s cousin Sergio Harris was also killed in the mass shooting. He had a wife and two young daughters. During a candlelight vigil on Monday, Harris’ cousin Jackie Henderson described him as “a great man”.

“He had his life taken from him – shot in the back, unacceptable,” Henderson said, according to Sacramento’s local Fox affiliate. She also called for an end to the gun violence that ended the lives of the six victims.

“The last time we had a mass shooting, we did the same thing, sat out here, held up our candles, talked about [how] the police are here for us now, the public officials are [here for us now] – they’re here for us. How are they here for us if we’re sitting here doing the same damn thing again?” Henderson continued.

A friend of Melinda Davis said she was a “very sassy lady” who lived on the streets of Sacramento near the shooting site.

Shawn Peter, a guide with the Downtown Sacramento Partnership, told the Sacramento Bee he’d known Davis for 15 years. She had been homeless and lived in the area on and off for a decade. “Melinda was a very eccentric individual, a very sassy lady,” he told the newspaper. “This was her world, 24/7.”

Officials had helped her find housing before the pandemic began but she had returned to the downtown business district in recent months, Peter said. A small bouquet of purple roses with a note saying “Melinda Rest In Peace” was left on the street.

The family of Martinez-Andrade say they are still looking for answers.

“Trying to get to the bottom of things without nobody knocking on our door, letting us know what really happened and stuff is kind of frustrating,” said Frank Gonzales, Martinez-Andrade’s stepfather, to KCRA. “It’s been rough. We’re still going through a hard time right now. “Hopefully we’ll get through this.”

Alexander, who was also killed in the early morning shooting, was described as headstrong by her father, who spoke to the same news outlet.

“She was outgoing, headstrong, spoke her peace whether you liked it or you didn’t,” said John Alexander.

This mass shooting comes less than six weeks after a man shot himself after killing his three daughters – ages nine, 10 and 13 – and a man who was supervising a visit between the girls and their father at a Sacramento-area church. He was banned from owning a gun because of a domestic violence restraining order but was able to skirt the prohibition by getting a ghost gun, a firearm that is ordered in parts and can be assembled in a few hours with the help of a YouTube tutorial. They lack serial numbers and can be bought without a background check, making them nearly impossible to trace through traditional means.

Police have not named the exact tool or accessory used to convert the firearm into a machine gun, but under state law it is considered an illegal weapon. Though it has faced many legal challenges, California’s assault weapon ban has been in effect since 1994. The longstanding rule prohibits the manufacturing, purchase, and possession of firearms that are considered assault weapons, which includes a gun that can

	<p>expel multiple rounds with one trigger pull. Police suspect this type of weapon was used in Sunday's melee because more than 100 shell casings were found.</p> <p>California has more than 100 gun laws on the books that determine who can sell ammunition, where guns can be bought, and the number of rounds any single firearm can hold. And cities including San Francisco, San Diego and Oakland have banned ghost guns and lodged lawsuits against manufacturers of parts. Still, California lawmakers are continuing to create legislation, including a measure modeled after Texas's abortion ban, that they hope will keep unregistered or illegally purchased guns out of people's hands, cars and homes.</p> <p>But the longtime partisan stalemate and lack of a permanent head of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) are making it more difficult for Biden to put his campaign promises into practice, leaving gun regulation mainly to states.</p> <p>On Monday, Senator Dianne Feinstein joined the chorus of officials calling on Congress to pass new gun legislation. "Of course, this isn't an isolated event. It's the latest in an epidemic of gun violence that continues to plague our country," Feinstein said in a statement.</p> <p>"Enough is enough. We can no longer ignore gun violence in our communities. Congress knows what steps must be taken to stop these mass shootings, we just have to act."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 War crime lessons from Balkan bloodshed
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/06/world/europe/ukraine-russia-war-crimes.html
GIST	<p>The evidence of apparent atrocities in Ukraine, with civilians executed in the suburbs of Kyiv, brings to mind another European horror: the bloody Balkan wars of the 1990s and the sometimes fraught, yearslong effort to bring those responsible to justice.</p> <p>In 1999, Slobodan Milosevic, the former president of Yugoslavia and the architect of a decade of war that took more than 200,000 lives and tore the country apart, became the first sitting head of state to be charged with war crimes. Three years later, he became the first former head of state to stand trial for genocide for the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as for crimes against humanity and violations of the Geneva Conventions for the wars in Croatia and Kosovo.</p> <p>Recalling the significance of the trial, Human Rights Watch, the advocacy group, observed in a 2006 report that bringing the former president before an international criminal tribunal "marked the end of the era when being a head of state meant immunity from prosecution."</p> <p>Since then, it noted, other former heads of state, including the former Liberian prime minister Charles Taylor and the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, have been brought to justice.</p> <p>Mr. Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in prison for his role in atrocities committed during Sierra Leone's civil war in the 1990s. Mr. Hussein was convicted in 2006 by an Iraqi special tribunal for crimes against humanity for the brutal repression of a Shiite town in the 1980s and sentenced to death by hanging.</p> <p>Mr. Milosevic died in his prison cell in The Hague in 2006, denying his victims the closure of a final judgment, but the public airing of his heinous crimes was nevertheless an important moral and legal reckoning.</p> <p>While the circumstances in Ukraine and the Balkan wars differ in fundamental ways, including the scope and scale of the bloodshed, some parallels jump out — not least of which is Russia's obfuscation and denial. In the face of graphic evidence that Ukrainian civilians in the suburb of Bucha, some with hands bound, were killed by Russian soldiers, Moscow has claimed it is all a "hoax."</p> <p>Mr. Milosevic, too, responded with a fanciful conspiracy theory when he was accused of complicity in the 1995 massacre at Srebrenica, in Bosnia, during which some 8,000 Muslim men and boys were killed,</p>

many with their hands tied behind their backs. He said the people really responsible for the worst bloodbath in Europe since World War II were French intelligence operatives, Muslim officials from Bosnia and mercenaries.

The wartime massacre of civilians at a Sarajevo market was not done by Serbs but staged by Muslims with bodies from a morgue, he claimed.

“It is all lies,” he said, as his trial began.

Whatever the echoes, legal experts say that bringing the Kremlin to account would be far more difficult than it was with Mr. Milosevic.

In the first place, no sitting president has ever been handed over to an international court. While President Vladimir V. Putin has significant public support and leads a nuclear power, Mr. Milosevic had already been ousted from power by the time he was sent to The Hague in June 2001.

And Russia is not Serbia.

Mr. Putin is an authoritarian leader with vociferous antagonism toward the West and its legal structures.

The Serbian prime minister in power when Mr. Milosevic was handed over for trial, Zoran Djindjic, was eager for a rapprochement with the West, while \$30 billion in foreign aid to rebuild Serbia’s devastated economy was at stake.

The burden of proof for war crimes, moreover, is very high.

Even with the Serbian government’s reluctant cooperation after Mr. Djindjic was assassinated in 2003, the task was difficult because of Mr. Milosevic’s obstructionism. A defiant Mr. Milosevic refused to recognize the U.N. war crimes tribunal, lied, dissembled and called in sick when insider witnesses materialized.

War crimes prosecutors are sometimes fortunate enough to have real-time evidence of atrocities at their disposal, but they still face enormous challenges. Many dots must be connected.

In the case of Mr. Putin, prosecutors would have to demonstrate that he issued specific orders that led to specific atrocities or that he knew about the crimes or did nothing to prevent them. Prosecutors would also have to show that Russian commanders had intentionally targeted civilian structures, or struck them during attacks that failed to discriminate between civilian and military targets.

Experts say the International Criminal Court in The Hague offers the best chance for real accountability for Russia. It was established in 1998 after separate United Nations tribunals that prosecuted mass atrocities in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia demonstrated the need for a standing judicial body to handle such cases.

The United States is not among the Hague court’s 123 member nations, and Mr. Putin recently instructed [his government to withdraw](#) from the treaty that created the court. His government assailed the tribunal as “ineffective and one-sided.”

By contrast, [the tribunal that tried Mr. Milosevic](#) was created by the United Nations Security Council in 1993 to track down and punish those responsible for the horrific violence against civilians during the breakup of Yugoslavia. As such, it had some political muscle behind it.

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HEADLINE	04/06 Concern: El Salvador new law on gangs
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/06/world/americas/el-salvador-media-gangs.html

El Salvador's Congress passed a measure late Tuesday to punish anyone who shares information about gangs with up to 15 years in prison, a move that observers say could lead to the censorship of journalists and more mass detentions.

The change to the penal code comes amid a state of emergency that has allowed security forces to detain civilians, without evidence, under suspicion for being involved in a gang. [Security forces have detained about 6,000 people](#) since the state of emergency was approved last week.

The measure appears intended to criminalize the relaying of gang messages. But critics say that the new law is so vague that it could be used to charge virtually anyone who speaks generally about the gangs, such as describing their territorial control or sharing gang graffiti, signs or messages in public or private communications.

Paired with the government's new ability to intercept the correspondence and communications of Salvadoran citizens without a court order — a measure passed under the state of emergency — the change could see thousands more detained.

"Salvadoran journalism has, for years, brought state abuses out of the gloom, and this series of actions indicate they want to silence it," said Astrid Valencia, Amnesty International's researcher for Central America.

"There is concern that the recent reform and the vagueness of the terms used may become the last obstacle promoted by Salvadoran authorities to limit the exercise of the right to inform and be informed."

The measures were put in place after a wave of violence over three days late last month that left at least 87 dead throughout the country. The authorities attributed the killings to MS-13, the largest gang with the greatest territorial control in El Salvador. On March 26, at least 62 people were killed when the gang started shooting anyone found on the street, officials said, as opposed to those involved in gang turf wars.

It was the deadliest day on record in the country since the end of its brutal civil war 30 years ago.

The wave of violence appeared to be a message by MS-13 to the government to renegotiate a deal allegedly forged shortly after Nayib Bukele came to power as president in 2019. The U.S. Treasury Department accused the government of providing financial incentives, prostitutes, mobile phones and other perks to gang leaders in prison in exchange for a reduction in violence and homicides across the country. The department imposed sanctions on top officials in Mr. Bukele's government late last year over the secret pact.

Mr. Bukele has denied that his government has a clandestine deal with the gangs.

He had campaigned on a pledge to restore security to El Salvador. He is wildly popular, with an approval rating of about 85 percent. During his nearly three-year rule, homicides have fallen drastically, making the violence late last month all the more shocking.

Shortly after the law was passed, Mr. Bukele, 40, took to his favored platform, Twitter, to address the measure.

"When the Germans wanted to eradicate Nazism, they prohibited by law all Nazi symbols as well as messages, apologies and everything aimed at promoting Nazism," Mr. Bukele tweeted on Tuesday night. "Now we will do that with the gangs."

The new measure states that any "radio, television, written or digital media" that "reproduce or transmit messages or communications originating from said criminal groups" could be subject to 10 to 15 years in prison.

Representative Guillermo Gallegos said during the plenary session to discuss the change, “What we are restricting is terrorist groups that may be advertising themselves — through some bad Salvadorans they advertise in the media.”

The Salvadoran Journalists’ Association called the new measures “gag order reforms” that represent “a clear attempt to censor news outlets” covering gangs.

Salvadoran news outlets have been closely documenting the thousands who have been arrested since last week, when the state of emergency came into effect. Detention centers in the capital, San Salvador, are so full that detainees are being sent to jails in rural areas.

While the government has claimed that the 6,000 people arrested since last week are all gang members, evidence is emerging that innocent civilians are being rounded up as they walk through their neighborhood, torn away from their children, friends or relatives and piled onto buses before they are driven off to jails across the country. On Tuesday, a journalist watched as a child with autism was detained, his mother crumpling onto the street, wailing with grief.

The news media has faced withering criticism from government officials, including accusations that they are sympathizing with gangs. A local news outlet, El Faro, was the first to break the news of the government’s pact with the gangs, and after that article was published, spyware was downloaded on the phones of most El Faro reporters.

Observers have raised concerns about the independence of El Salvador’s judicial system during the state of emergency. Last week, Mr. Bukele took to Twitter to order the investigation of a judge after the judge freed several gang members. Hours later, local news media reported that the judge had been transferred to a remote area in the interior of the country, presumably as punishment.

Under the state of emergency, freedom of assembly has been banned and the right to state-sponsored legal defense upon detention has been suspended. Since the arrests are unfolding in the poorest neighborhoods in the country, the change affects mostly detained residents of those areas.

Mr. Bukele has mocked the international community and rights groups that have expressed concern over the arrests.

“If they love the gang members so much, come get them, we’ll give them to them two for one,” the president Tweeted recently.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Jan. 6 probe faces wide net of witnesses
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/us/politics/trump-allies-january-6.html
GIST	<p>Among the challenges facing the federal grand jury recently empaneled to investigate the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol is the sheer number of people who might have information relevant to its inquiry.</p> <p>According to a subpoena issued by the grand jury, prosecutors are asking for records about people who organized or spoke at several pro-Trump rallies after the election. They presumably include two events in Washington in November and December 2020 that preceded the gathering on the Ellipse near the White House on Jan. 6, 2021, where President Donald J. Trump told the crowd to descend on the Capitol.</p> <p>The subpoena is also seeking records about anyone who provided security at those events and about those who were deemed to be “V.I.P. attendees.”</p> <p>Moreover, it requests information about any members of the executive and legislative branches who may have taken part in planning or executing the rallies, or tried to “obstruct, influence, impede or delay” the certification of the presidential election.</p>

Each of these broad categories could involve dozens of individuals. Taken together, the total number of potential witnesses — or at some point, targets — sought after by the grand jury could easily reach into the hundreds.

The investigation appears to be in its early stages and there is no way of knowing at this point where it may go, what crimes it might identify or who it may ultimately focus on. Many people of interest to investigators might be called only as witnesses.

One possible road map — at least in terms of who the grand jury may still want to hear from — is the parallel probe by the House select committee investigating the Capitol attack, which has already interviewed hundreds of witnesses, including, on Tuesday, Ivanka Trump, the former president's daughter and adviser.

The Rallies

A relatively small group of political operatives did the bulk of the work in organizing the pro-Trump rallies in Washington that kicked off after the election and sought to challenge the results, often using the slogan "Stop the Steal."

Prominent among them, according to interviews and documents, was Amy Kremer, a former Tea Party activist who helped create a group called Women for America First. The group set up a cross-country bus tour gathering Mr. Trump's aggrieved supporters behind the baseless assertions of a stolen election.

Within hours of the last polls closing on Election Day, Ms. Kremer started working closely with her daughter, Kylie Jane Kremer, to set up one of the first "Stop the Steal" Facebook pages. Both women were involved — often in close coordination with the White House — in planning pro-Trump rallies on Nov. 14 and Dec. 12, 2020, and then in setting up Mr. Trump's appearance at the Ellipse on Jan. 6, 2021.

Two other people who helped Ms. Kremer were Jennifer L. Lawrence and Dustin Stockton, both of whom had once worked closely with Stephen K. Bannon, a former top adviser to Mr. Trump. Another organizer for Women for America First was Cindy Chafian, who ultimately broke away from the group to form a new organization, the Eighty Percent Coalition, which planned its own event on Jan. 5.

Then there was a separate group of planners around Ali Alexander, a provocateur who rose in right-wing circles after the election. Mr. Alexander, an associate of Mr. Trump's longtime adviser Roger J. Stone Jr., was part of a group of activists who planned an event at the Capitol itself and marched with the crowd to the building after Mr. Trump's speech at the Ellipse.

Altogether, scores of people spoke at the rallies in November and December and at the gatherings on Jan. 5 and Jan. 6. They included people like Mr. Stone; Mr. Trump's former national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn; and Alex Jones, the conspiracy theorist and host of the TV show Infowars. The speakers also included pastors, state-level politicians and anti-vaccine activists.

It is hard to know who prosecutors might consider a "V.I.P." from these events — especially for the November rally, often known as the Million MAGA March, and the one in December, which is sometimes referred to as the Jericho March.

There were dozens of V.I.P.s who attended Mr. Trump's incendiary speech at the Ellipse on Jan. 6, according to leaked documents from event organizers. That rally also featured appearances by Rudolph W. Giuliani, Mr. Trump's personal lawyer, and John C. Eastman, the law professor who was promoting the idea that Vice President Mike Pence could block congressional certification of the Electoral College results.

The attendees at the Ellipse speech included Mike Lindell, the MyPillow chief executive who helped spread Mr. Trump's lies about a rigged election, and the YouTube stars known as Diamond and Silk, who are prominent Trump supporters.

Trump's Circles

The federal grand jury subpoena examined by The New York Times seeks information about members of the executive and legislative branches who might have been involved in the effort to delay congressional certification of the election results, suggesting that prosecutors are interested in learning more about the roles that Mr. Trump's aides and allies inside the government may have played.

It is not clear if any Trump-era executive or legislative branch members have received subpoenas, and there is no public indication that anyone has been targeted for prosecution.

But in looking for more information about what was happening at both the White House and on Capitol Hill as Mr. Trump sought to stay in power, the House select committee has already expressed interest in a range of White House and campaign advisers, as well as contractors who worked to set up the rally. They exist in concentric circles in and around Mr. Trump's orbit.

Among them is Mark Meadows, the White House chief of staff under Mr. Trump, who turned over text messages to the House committee that served as a road map not just of his own activities, but those of others. He was one of the few people with Mr. Trump as the riot at the Capitol took place.

Katrina Pierson, a longtime Trump political adviser, was in direct contact with Mr. Trump about the details of the rallies on Jan. 5 and Jan. 6, including who would be speaking and what music would be played, according to a former administration official and the House committee. She attended a meeting in which Mr. Trump is said to have discussed wanting the National Guard deployed, anticipating counterprotests.

Caroline Wren, a professional fund-raiser and a friend of Kimberly Guilfoyle, an adviser to Mr. Trump and the girlfriend of Donald Trump Jr., was listed on an attachment for a permit that rally organizers gave the Park Police. Megan Powers, a longtime Trump aide, was listed on a rally permit.

Members of Congress

Among the Republicans in Congress who worked publicly to keep Mr. Trump in power were Representatives Mo Brooks of Alabama, Paul Gosar of Arizona and Andy Biggs of Arizona, all of whom Mr. Alexander, the "Stop the Steal" organizer, has said helped set the events of Jan. 6 in motion.

"We four schemed up of putting maximum pressure on Congress while they were voting," Mr. Alexander said in a since-deleted video posted online, "so that who we couldn't lobby, we could change the hearts and the minds of Republicans who were in that body, hearing our loud roar from outside."

Mr. Gosar's chief of staff has said his office merely promoted "Stop the Steal" events and was not involved in planning them. Mr. Biggs, who provided a video message for Mr. Alexander to play at a Dec. 19 rally, has denied coordinating event planning with Mr. Alexander.

Mr. Brooks, who wore body armor onstage on Jan. 6 as he told the crowd to "start taking down names and kicking ass," also denied coordinating with Mr. Alexander. Mr. Brooks recently turned on Mr. Trump after the former president rescinded his endorsement in a Senate race, and said Mr. Trump had repeatedly asked him in recent months to illegally "rescind" the election, remove President Biden and force a new special election.

Mr. Brooks was one of two members of Congress who spoke at Mr. Trump's rally at the Ellipse before the attack on the Capitol. The other was Representative Madison Cawthorn, Republican of North Carolina, who weeks earlier encouraged the public to call members of Congress and "lightly threaten them" if they did not support Mr. Trump's claims of voter fraud.

Representative Louie Gohmert, Republican of Texas, unsuccessfully sued Mr. Pence over his refusal to interfere in the election certification. Other Republicans who used inflammatory rhetoric around that time included Representatives Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Lauren Boebert of Colorado, first-term lawmakers, who referred to the day as Republicans' "1776 moment."

On Dec. 21, 2020, Mr. Trump met with members of the House Freedom Caucus to discuss their plans to challenge Mr. Biden's victory. Among those present were Mr. Gosar, Mr. Biggs, Mr. Brooks, Ms. Greene, and Representatives Jim Jordan of Ohio and Scott Perry of Pennsylvania, who were deeply involved in Mr. Trump's effort to fight the election results.

The House committee has so far asked only three members of Congress for an interview: Representative Kevin McCarthy of California, the Republican leader who engaged in what he called a "very heated" call with Mr. Trump during the riot; Mr. Jordan and Mr. Perry. All three men have refused to agree to a voluntary interview.

Security Providers

While professional companies provided much of the public and private security at pro-Trump rallies in November, December and January, their work was often augmented by members of far-right militia and paramilitary groups like the Oath Keepers, the Three Percenters and the 1st Amendment Praetorian.

The 1st Amendment Praetorian, known as 1AP, was brought in, for example, to protect Mr. Alexander for his appearance at the Million MAGA March in November. In December, the group served as bodyguards for Mr. Flynn and others during the Jericho March, working in concert with members of the Oath Keepers. Three Percenters wearing body armor were also on hand as security that day.

On Jan. 5 and Jan. 6, several members of the Oath Keepers were assigned to protect Mr. Stone at his various public appearances, including two members who have since been indicted in connection with the Capitol attack. One of the indicted Oath Keepers, Joshua James, pleaded guilty last month to seditious conspiracy charges and is cooperating with federal prosecutors.

The 1st Amendment Praetorian also protected Mr. Flynn on Jan. 6.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Spokane police crackdown on shootings
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/spokane-police-crackdown-shootings/293-e2e69ef7-7096-4f58-a982-a8b840e5483f
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — In the last two weeks, Spokane police responded to four different shootings. The department is worried it could get worse if Spokane doesn't take a stand.</p> <p>Data from SPD shows a total of 40 shootings (18 drive-bys & 22 other) in Spokane from Jan. 1, 2022 to March 31, 2022. This total does not reflect the four recent shootings.</p> <p>In the same time frame last year, Spokane had 34 total shootings (10 drive-by & 24 other). That's a nearly 18% increase.</p> <p>Cpl. Nick Briggs said this an alarming trend and SPD needs the community's help to address it.</p> <p>"We're at 40 already, so at the current pace we will surpass 2021," Briggs said. "That's clearly alarming for everybody and alarming for us."</p> <p>He said with the increase in shootings, detectives are working continuously to identify those responsible and hold them accountable. Major Crimes Unit handles the most serious crimes including many drive-by shootings. The Safe Streets Task Force also works closely with Major Crimes on gang and drug related crimes.</p> <p>But, investigators need the community's help to make arrests and solve these crimes.</p> <p>"We have amazingly talented detectives and investigators, but ultimately, these investigations aren't magic," Briggs said. "We need people to talk to us and provide us information."</p>

According to Briggs, neighbors and witnesses to gang activity or violent crimes are encouraged to do the following:

- Report to Crime Check or the Safe Streets Task Force.
- Share photos and video (including security footage) if it is safe to do so.

"Whatever little piece of information, it's never too small to call in to just make us aware of it," Briggs said. "It might not be something that we can act on right then and there, but it might play a huge part down the road in the investigation."

He acknowledges there are some who reluctant to speak with police out of fear of retaliation. But he said change can only happen if everyone takes a stand against the violence.

"The way that members of the community can show that this can't be tolerated is by giving us the information that we need to solve those things," Briggs said. "It really is about what are we going to tolerate as a community here in Spokane. And we need everybody to pitch in so that we can get these things resolved."

SPD adds most of these shootings are not random and a occur across Spokane. Most of these shootings are not random and are committed by a small group of people with some type of connection- whether that be a drug or gang connection.

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HEADLINE	04/05 SPOG public safety index hits new low
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-police-guilds-public-safety-index-hits-new-low
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A new ranking by the Seattle police union suggests a dire picture for public safety in the city, assigning the lowest score to date in the group's weekly index on crime and staffing levels.</p> <p>The Seattle Public Safety Index is posted on Twitter each week by the Seattle Police Officers Guild and draws on two major factors: the number of deployable officers and the rate of violent crimes.</p> <p>The loss of officers by the Seattle Police Department has been profound.</p> <p>Between 2020 and November 2021, over 325 officers left the department. And another 43 officers departed the department just since the start of the year.</p> <p>The departures by the officers occurred as violent crimes continue to surge.</p> <p>"This is red alert time," said Mike Solan, president of the Seattle Police Officers Guild. "We are in a serious staffing situation."</p> <p>Solan says the depleted ranks and the rise in crime is what keeps the police union's weekly public safety index in the danger zone.</p> <p>The latest index shows a ranking of 25 out of 100, which is an all-time low.</p> <p>"Given the team we had that put these numbers together, 25 is an appropriate number to alert our community to the realities of what the defunding nonsense has done," Solan said.</p> <p>The first index was published in early February and was 30 out of 100. The guild based it on the number of deployable officers and the week's tally of violent crime.</p> <p>The latest figures show 885 deployable officers. The guild said adequate staffing would be closer to 1,400 officers.</p>

	<p>Solan said 18 people are involved in compiling the index, which includes the 15 guild board members and its three executive directors. The guild also conducts community polling to come up with a final index ranking each week.</p> <p>Some Seattle residents still want to the city to pursue public safety alternatives that don't increase the size of the police department.</p> <p>"I am on the track of defund the police," said Lauren Wilson, who lives in North Seattle. "I'm not really a huge fan of cops. I don't feel like they solve a lot of issues."</p> <p>Others said they'd like to see more police under certain conditions.</p> <p>"There could always be more but it depends on what they spend their time doing," said Jessica Powell, who lives in Rainier Valley. "It would be nice to have them visible, every now and then."</p> <p>Seattle is launching a nationwide search for a new police chief and Mayor Bruce Harrell has encouraged interim Chief Adrian Diaz to apply.</p> <p>Solan said whomever takes the helm will have enormous challenges ahead, and it starts with staffing levels.</p> <p>"I think our community needs to be informed of the reality of the dire public safety situation we find ourselves in," Solan said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Search for suspects in latest ATM theft
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/atm-theft-des-moines/281-efda3eb4-54b3-4ef5-b4ea-2ad1491a181b
GIST	<p>DES MOINES, Wash. — Police are searching for at least two suspects who tried to steal an ATM in Des Moines early Tuesday morning.</p> <p>A Des Moines Police Department spokesperson said the suspects used a U-Haul to try to remove an ATM from inside an E-Z Mart at 21620 Marine View Drive S around 2 a.m.</p> <p>They tried to use the truck's tow strap to pull the ATM from the business, but the strap broke.</p> <p>Initially, officers were able to follow the suspects as they drove away in the truck. However, when the suspects abandoned the truck and fled on foot, officers were unable to locate them.</p> <p>The U-Haul was not reported stolen at the time it was located, according to Des Moines Police Sgt. Scott Oak.</p> <p>Oak said that three male suspects may have been involved.</p> <p>There is no description of the suspects and the police department said they hope to get surveillance video from the business to help their investigation.</p> <p>The latest ATM theft is about three miles from where a similar incident occurred in early March, during which the suspects smashed into the front of a market and took off with the ATM in the back of their vehicle.</p> <p>Officers tried to stop that vehicle after seeing it with the ATM in the back, but ended the chase when the suspects didn't stop.</p> <p>Law enforcement agencies say that ATM thefts have been a growing issue across the region. As of mid-March, the King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) was investigating at least seven ATM thefts since the beginning of 2022.</p>

	<p>The Seattle Police Department revealed that it believed there was one group of suspects responsible for more than a dozen of these ATM thefts.</p> <p>There have also been a number of thefts in Snohomish and Pierce counties in recent weeks.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Lynnwood police: fatal shooting in park
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/man-found-dead-after-apparent-shooting-in-lynnwood-park/
GIST	<p>Lynnwood police are investigating after a man was found dead in a vehicle in a parking lot at Daleway Park on Tuesday afternoon.</p> <p>Officers responded to reports of shots fired and multiple people seen fleeing the area near 64th Avenue West and 188 Street Southwest at about 2:30 p.m. Upon arrival, a deceased man was found inside a vehicle in the lot that had several bullet holes, according to Lynnwood police Cmdr. Sean Doty.</p> <p>Witnesses told police they saw two men running from the scene through the backyards of nearby residences, as well as a person fleeing the area in a black sedan, Doty said.</p> <p>Officers located and interviewed two men who fled on foot, but it's unclear if they were involved, Doty said. Police are still searching for the driver of the sedan and will continue to interview possible suspects, he said.</p> <p>No suspects have been arrested.</p> <p>Police are processing the scene and will seek a warrant Tuesday evening to search the man's vehicle, Doty said.</p> <p>The cause and manner of the man's death, as well as his name, are expected to be released this week by the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office.</p> <p>The park remained closed Tuesday evening, as was 64th Avenue West along the park.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Identified: 'I-65 killer' women motel clerks
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/05/us/i65-killer-indiana-kentucky.html
GIST	<p>His chosen conduit for terror was Interstate 65, preying on women working as night clerks at motels along the highway.</p> <p>For more than three decades, the serial killer evaded authorities, who say he was responsible for at least three murders and a separate sexual assault in Kentucky and Indiana during the late 1980s and in 1990.</p> <p>Investigators now say that they have discovered the identity of the man known as the I-65 Killer, and that he died in 2013 at age 68.</p> <p>At a news conference Tuesday in Indianapolis, authorities said that the killings were committed by Harry Edward Greenwell, who had served at least two prison sentences, in Iowa and Kentucky, for a string of violent crimes.</p> <p>The breakthrough in the case was reached when genetic genealogy was used to match Greenwell's DNA to ancestry records, according to investigators, who declined to elaborate on those findings.</p> <p>This undated booking photo provided by the Indiana State Police shows Harry Edward Greenwell, the suspect in the "Days Inn" cold case. Police announced the identity of the suspect of the murders during a press conference in Indianapolis, Tuesday, April 5, 2022. Police identified Greenwell more than 30</p>

years after three women were killed and another assaulted using investigative genealogy. (Indiana State Police via AP)

Law enforcement officials said there was a distinct possibility that Greenwell was responsible for additional murders, rapes and robberies in the Midwest, which are being actively investigated.

"I hope that today might bring a little bit of solace to you, to know that the animal that did this is no longer on this Earth," Douglas G. Carter, the superintendent of the Indiana State Police, told the victims' relatives at the news conference.

Carter said that advances in DNA analysis and the dogged work of investigators should give other criminals pause.

"The message is: You might be able to hide for a while, but we're going to find you, even if you're not here," he said.

Three of the victims were sexually assaulted and shot. The motels, one in Kentucky and two in Indiana, were just off Interstate 65, a north-south highway that extends from Gary, Indiana, to Mobile, Alabama.

In the early morning hours of Feb. 21, 1987, police discovered the body of Vicki Heath, 42, behind a Super 8 motel in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, The Courier-Journal of Louisville reported at the time. A guest had alerted the authorities that the motel's clerk was missing.

More than two years later, and about 300 miles north, investigators say, the killer struck again — twice in a matter of hours.

A worker at the Days Inn in Merrillville, Indiana, had found the body of the night clerk, Margaret Gill, 24, in a vacant wing of the motel on March 3, 1989, according to news reports at the time.

About 2 1/2 hours later, Jeanne Gilbert, 34, was abducted at gunpoint from a Days Inn in Remington, Indiana, according to published reports. Her body was found in a ditch about 15 miles away on a road near a farm.

"In our case, we'll never know what the killer was thinking," Kimberly Gilbert Wright, Gilbert's daughter, said Tuesday during the news conference. "We'll never learn any of the whys of his actions, and that's just where we sit today."

Wright thanked investigators for bringing the serial killer "out of the dark and into the light."

"For some of us, no closure has ever taken place, and the horrors are lived on a daily basis," she said.

About \$426 had been stolen from the two motels in Indiana, which were about 45 minutes apart.

But with no witnesses to give a description of a killer, the investigation remained cold.

Then in January 1990, a 21-year-old clerk at Days Inn in Columbus, Indiana, about 45 miles southeast of Indianapolis, told authorities that she had been raped at knifepoint in a motel robbery that fit the pattern of the previous attacks, authorities said.

The clerk was able to give investigators a description of her attacker, who she said had thrown coffee in her face. A sketch of the attacker, a bearded man in his late 30s to mid-40s with greenish eyes and a knit cap, was developed based on the clerk's description.

The rendering led to dozens of leads and several potential suspects, but their DNA did not connect them to the murders, which authorities more than two decades later had determined to be the work of a serial killer.

Greenwell, who was born in Kentucky and was in his 40s when the murders took place, had an extensive criminal past, authorities said.

A timeline provided by the FBI on Tuesday showed that he was arrested on armed robbery and sodomy charges in Kentucky in 1963 and 1965. He was paroled from the Kentucky State Penitentiary in 1969.

In 1982, he was arrested on burglary charges in Iowa, where he twice escaped from custody and was recaptured. That same year, he was sentenced to prison in Iowa, but was released in 1983. He died of cancer in Iowa in 2013, law enforcement officials said Tuesday, citing Greenwell's obituary.

The breakthrough in identifying the so-called I-65 Killer adds to the list of cold cases that have been solved as a result of genetic genealogy. The process, which involves cross-checking DNA evidence with ancestry records, has been instrumental in identifying dozens of suspects in languishing cold cases, most notably the so-called Golden State Killer in California.

Investigators said that they had preserved a wealth of evidence from each of the crime scenes in Kentucky and Indiana that included DNA, ballistics, hair and clothing fibers. In 2019, an FBI task force became involved in the case, which is when efforts focused on using genetic genealogy to identify the serial killer, said Herbert J. Stapleton, the special agent in charge of the FBI's Indianapolis field office.

"I know that this announcement can't take away the pain that you felt at this loss," Stapleton said. "But what we hope is that through today's information and revelation, this provides some answers that may aid you in your healing process that you go through every single day and bring you some sense of peace."

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HEADLINE	04/06 SC plant shooting: 2 injured, suspect dead
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/2-employees-wounded-suspect-dead-shooting-south-carolina-plant-frankische/
GIST	<p>Two people were wounded and a suspect was dead after a shooting Tuesday night at a plant in Anderson County in northwest South Carolina.</p> <p>Deputies responded shortly after 10:30 p.m. to a Fränkische plastics fabrication facility. The Anderson County Coroner's Office said the two victims were working there when the suspect arrived and opened fire.</p> <p>Both victims were hospitalized, one of them in critical condition. There was no immediate word on the other's condition.</p> <p>The coroner's office said the suspect was a former Fränkische employee and died of a single, self-inflicted gunshot wound.</p> <p>After shots were fired, plant employees sought shelter at a nearby tavern, CBS Spartanburg, South Carolina affiliate WSPA-TV reports. They were expected to be taken to a local church for medical evaluations and police interviews, the station said.</p> <p>Investigators told WSPA about 30 employees were at the plant when the shooting happened.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Police: 3 rd arrest Sacramento investigation
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/06/us/sacramento-california-shooting-wednesday/index.html
GIST	Three men have been arrested after a mass shooting in downtown Sacramento, California, though only one has been officially charged and made a court appearance as of Tuesday evening.

The shooting took place just after 2 a.m. PT Sunday and left six people dead, 12 wounded and a chaotic crime scene littered with more than 100 shell casings. Police have said the investigation is highly complex and involves many witnesses, numerous videos and significant physical evidence.

The latest development came Tuesday when police said they arrested someone for “being a prohibited person in possession of a firearm.” Police said he was seen carrying a gun in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, but believe that gun was not fired in the melee. He has not been charged with crimes directly related to the shootings, police said, and online inmate records indicate he was released Tuesday. CNN has reached out to the public defender’s office.

The other two men arrested are brothers – Dandrae Martin, 26, and Smiley Martin, 27 – who were taken into custody Monday and Tuesday. The brothers are believed to be responsible for firing into the downtown crowd, according to Sacramento Police Officer Chad Lewis, though he named only Dandrae Martin.

“He (Dandrae) was charged with assault with a firearm,” Lewis said Tuesday, but did not rule out the prospect of others having fired shots. “There could be more than the two shooters we’re already aware of,” Lewis said.

Dandrae Martin has been charged with felony possession of a firearm. He made his first appearance in court Tuesday, but did not enter a plea.

“That firearm was modified from its original condition with a component that made it capable of firing automatic gunfire and would classify it as a machine gun by California law,” Lewis said.

Smiley Martin was found at the scene of the shooting early Sunday with “serious injuries from gunfire” and taken to a local hospital, the Sacramento Police Department said in a news release. Once Smiley Martin’s medical care is complete, he will be booked at the Sacramento County Main Jail on charges of possession of a firearm by a prohibited person and possession of a machine gun, police said.

The Martin brothers were among the dozen people injured in the shooting.

Dandrae Martin’s next court date is April 26, where his bail is expected to be set. His attorney, Linda Parisi, said Martin was “very somber” during their brief discussion, adding she feels the response to gun violence should be bigger than just one case.

“This is not just a criminal justice issue, and it is narrow-sighted to say well all we have to do is address what happened on this occasion, have it processed through the criminal justice,” she told reporters. “It’s bigger than that and we need to address that. People are suffering, all people. As I say, everyone is touched by gun violence.”

The shooting in Sacramento was one of more than 120 mass shootings in the United States this year and one of at least 10 shooting incidents over the weekend.

A fight may have preceded the shooting

The shooting happened just after 2 a.m. PT in a bustling part of downtown, a few blocks from the California State Capitol, Sacramento City Hall and the Golden 1 Center, where the city’s NBA team plays home games.

A video posted on social media appears to show an altercation before the shooting, police said Sunday. “We are currently working to determine what, if any, relation these events have to the shooting,” the statement said.

Search warrants were executed at three homes and at least one handgun was recovered, according to the Sunday statement, and authorities said they had received more than 100 video or photo files on a tip portal.

Detectives have since found “hundreds of items of evidence at the scene,” including more than 100 shell casings, police said in a Tuesday news release. Investigators also located a stolen handgun that was “found to have been converted to a weapon capable of automatic gunfire,” police said.

At least three buildings and three cars were hit by bullets, according to police.

“There were a lot of shots fired that night, and hence the complexity of the investigation,” police chief Katherine Lester told CNN affiliate KCRA. Lester has said there were multiple shooters and that a large fight preceded the gunfire.

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